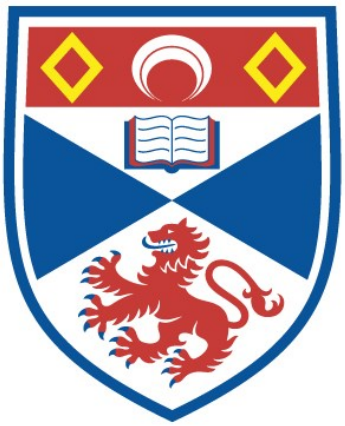
FRANCE, MAN AND LANGUAGE IN FRENCH RESISTANCE POETRY

Ann E. Longwell

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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by

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I, Ann E. Longwell, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October 1981 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in April 1982; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1981 and 1989.

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ABSTRACT

The Second World War witnessed what was recognised at the time as a poetic revival in France. The phenomenon of Resistance poetry in particular commanded literary attention throughout the war. Immediately afterwards, however, this large corpus of poetry was widely dismissed as an unfortunate aberration. Viewed as ephemeral poetry of circumstance with only a documentary value, as tendentious *poésie engagée*, as propaganda or as conservative patriotic verse, it was thought unworthy of consideration as poetry.

Marked by the reputation it gained just after the war, Resistance poetry has been given short shrift in critical studies, and has only rarely been the focus of academic attention.

This study reexpounds in detail and with a wide range of reference the debate concerning Resistance poetry, and draws attention to a number of poets who are not widely known, or who are not known as Resistance poets. It demonstrates through a thematic and formal analysis of a selection of Resistance poetry that it is in fact no different from poetry as implicitly understood by critics who have dismissed it.

A description of commitment in Resistance poetry is followed by a thematic study of its three related objects, namely France, man and language. Detailed examinations of these three major concerns in the poetry challenge the received view that Resistance poetry is conservative in its patriotism, dogmatic or essentialist in its commitment, and reactionary in its use of language.

This thematic study is complemented by illustrative analyses of individual poems or parts of poems, and by a concluding commentary.

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Finally, in grateful and fond acknowledgement of their constant support, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Jack and Betty Longwell.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Repeated references to certain works will be by abbreviated title and page number. Full details of publication can be found in the Bibliography.

AD	P. Eluard, *Les Armes de la douleur*
ARA	P. Eluard, *Au rendez-vous allemand*
Aut	P. Emmanuel, *Autobiographies*
Br	L. Aragon, *Brocéliande*
Can	P. Emmanuel, *Cantos*
CC	J. Marcenac, *Le Cavalier de coupe*
CF	J. Marcenac, *Le Ciel des fusillés*
CGN	L. Masson, *Chroniques de la grande nuit*
Co	A. Borne, *Contre-feu*
Com	P. Emmanuel, *Combats avec tes défenseurs*
CP	P. Seghers, *Le Chien de pique*
Cr	L. Aragon, *Le Crève-coeur*
DA	R. Desnos, *Destinée arbitraire*
Dés	B. Péret, *Le Déshonneur des poètes*
DF	L. Aragon, *La Diane française*
DM	L. Masson, *Délivrez-nous du mal*
DN	P. Eluard, *La Dernière nuit*
Dom	J. Lescure (ed.), *Domaine français*
DP	P. Seghers, *Le Domaine public*
E	E. Guillevic, *Exécutoire*
EEP	L. Aragon, *En étrange pays dans mon pays lui-même*
EN	J. Cayrol, *Et nunc*
Europe	*La poésie et la Résistance*, special issue of *Europe*, 1974
FA	P. Seghers, *Le Futur antérieur*
FC	J. Tardieu, *Le Fleuve caché*
FF	G. Audisio, *Feuilles de Fresnes*
FM	R. Char, *Fureur et mystère*
HP	L. Bérimont, *La Huche à pain*
IPP	A. Frénaud, *Il n'y a pas de paradis*
JC	P. Emmanuel, *Jour de colère*
JP	J. Tardieu, *Jours pétrifiés*

LGP	P. Emmanuel, *La Liberté guide nos pas*
LNM	L. Masson, *La Lumière naît le mercredi*
LO I	P. Eluard, *Le Livre ouvert, I*
LO II	P. Eluard, *Le Livre ouvert, II*
LT	P. Eluard, *Le Lit la table*
MG	L. Aragon, *Le Musée Grévin*
OC I	P. Eluard, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1
OC II	P. Eluard, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2
PFJ	J. Paulhan, D. Aury (eds.), *La Patrie se fait tous les jours*
PFM	J. Supervielle, *Poèmes de la France malheureuse*
PI	L. Masson, *Poèmes d'ici*
Pr	F. Ponge, *Proêmes*
PV	P. Eluard, *Poésie et vérité 1942*
RM	A. Frénaud, *Les Rois Mages*
RBS	R. Char, *Recherche de la base et du sommet*
SF	A. Frénaud, *La Sainte face*
Son	J. Cassou, *33 sonnets composés au secret*
SPI	P. Eluard, *Sur les pentes inférieures*
T	E. Guillevic, *Terraqué*
TM	P. Seghers, *Le Temps des merveilles*
TP	P. Emmanuel, *Tristesse ô ma patrie*
VP	P.J. Jouve, *La Vierge de Paris*
YE	L. Aragon, *Les Yeux d'Elsa*

INTRODUCTION

The Second World War witnessed what was widely recognised at the time as a poetic revival in France. Considerably more poetry was published and sold then than in the period preceding the war.[1] Frequent references were made to this blossoming (or rash) of poetry, and to its popularity. In 1942, for instance, René Tavernier states: 'La poésie est à l'ordre du jour (...). Depuis 1940 nous assistons à un regain poétique dans les domaines étroitement liés de la création, de l'édition, du public. Nier ces deux derniers faits, c'est aller contre la vérité statistique'.[2] Henri Hell writes in the same year:

> Que la poésie tienne actuellement une place considérable dans la vie littéraire française, nul n'y contredira. Depuis l'armistice, le foisonnement poétique est incessant. (...) on lit les poètes comme on lisait, il y a peu encore, les vies romancées, - avec avidité.[3]

Noting the tendentious nature of most of the 'new' poetry, and of the magazines in which a lot of it was published, critics writing in the collaborationist press referred to this 'regain poétique' ironically and dismissively. Pierre Pascal notes: 'c'est un truisme extrêmement facile que de s'extasier sur le "renouveau" de la Poésie française, depuis la déroute et la débâcle';[4] Roger Joseph refers to 'la farce de la "Jeune Poésie"';[5] in his article 'Y a-t-il un renouveau de la poésie?',[6] Brasillach writes of 'cette mode pseudo-poétique': unable to deny the quantity of poetry being produced, and consumed by the public, Brasillach chooses to question its quality: 'Certes, la quantité y est, et chaque jour voit paraître quelque sottise en lignes inégales, sur laquelle la boulimie de lecture d'un certain public se jette aussitôt.' Acknowledged gladly by some and grudgingly by others, the renewed interest in poetry was a phenomenon that commanded literary attention throughout the war.

The poetry which attracted most notice at the time is that which has been referred to since the Liberation as Resistance poetry - a term used here and throughout this thesis to denote wartime poetry in which the reader recognises a direct or indirect

opposition to the Occupation and the Collaboration. In an article written in 1947, Jean Pérus objects to this label, on the grounds that it gives the poetry the status of a historical document and implies that it was an unfortunate aberration:

> Il n'y a pas de "poésie de la Résistance". On veut suggérer l'idée d'une poésie d'une nature particulière, surgie après 1940, sous le coup de l'occupation et disparaissant avec elle au lendemain de la Libération, sorte de parenthèse dans l'histoire de la poésie française. Une ride en quelque sorte à la surface de la pure poésie, un instant atteinte par les remous d'un accident historique.[7]

Pérus's comments here reveal what was, by 1947, the dominant view of Resistance poetry. It was regarded and dismissed by many critics as a mere flash in the pan. Its wartime popularity was attributed - probably rightly - to its emotional appeal, and to the fact that it recorded events that occurred throughout a critical and testing peroid of French history. It was deemed unworthy of attention as poetry.

The death-knell for Resistance poetry was already being sounded during the war. The surrealist poet C.-F. Chabrun writes in 1943: 'jamais on ne vit en France une aussi lamentable renaissance de la médiocrité poétique'. In his mind, the reasons behind the poetry's success (and, one suspects, the very fact that it *was* popular) guaranteed its eventual fall from grace:

> Les procès de ces poéteux n'est pas à faire. Les circonstances même de leurs succès sont un témoignage à charge suffisamment écrasant pour qu'il soit inutile de prophétiser le caractère éphémère de leurs manifestations ni les fessées dont le bruit rythmera bientôt la fin de leurs exploits.[8]

In 1942, Kléber Haedens predicts that Resistance poets 'paieront leur goût pour l'actualité d'un prompt et juste oubli';[9] M.-E. Naegelen implies, similarly, that the poetry would self-destruct at the end of the war: 'Quand s'est refaite la paix, il ne reste qu'une oeuvre de circonstance'.[10] Even certain exponents and supporters of Resistance poetry warned that its success was likely to be short-lived. In 'D'une poésie armée' (1942), Pierre Emmanuel expresses concern that some of the 'civic' poetry being written at the time measured its value too readily on 'l'ébranlement superficiel du public' (p. 60), and depended for its appeal on the immediate impact of its subject-matter:

> Si l'on envisage avec quelque recul une partie de la poésie récente, on s'aperçoit qu'elle ne satisfait pas aux conditions qui lui assureraient une immortalité *sans réserve*: trop asservie à l'incident, elle se dégradera d'autant plus vite qu'elle aura davantage compté sur le retentissement de celui-ci. (p. 59)

Henri Hell warns also that there was need to be wary of 'une poésie anecdotique, terriblement servie de l'événement, qui passera comme lui et comme lui sera temporaire'.[11]

These predictions and fears appeared to be realised almost as soon as France was liberated. In the years that immediately followed the war, Resistance poetry was commonly dismissed by critics as a time-bound phenomenon - a poetry of circumstance, intimately linked to the events that inspired it, its appeal bound to dwindle as time went by. In *Poètes contemporains* (1944), L.-G. Gros writes that 'Il n'est plus possible d'aimer une certaine poésie de circonstances lorsque les circonstances (...) ont à ce point changé' (p. 76); he contends that much of Aragon's Resistance poetry 'n'a plus qu'une valeur documentaire' (p. 77). In 1945, Maurice Nadeau again relegates Resistance poetry to history. He asks: 'le poète-témoin ne fait-il pas un mauvais calcul?', arguing that, 'disparues les circonstances "grisantes" qui l'ont amené à chanter, à faire chorus, disparaît la valeur de son témoignage qui n'est plus qu'historique'.[12] In the same year, Louis Parrot remarks: 'Les poètes empruntaient aux circonstances douloureuses d'alors le sujet de leurs pièces en vers. Et voici que les circonstances changent et que les poètes, irrités et penauds, se trouvent aujourd'hui à court',[13] and H.-J. Dupuy:

> Du déferlement des poèmes de la guerre, de la clandestinité, des stalags et des camps d'extermination, il faut bien dire que, passée l'émotion causée par leur qualité de témoignage, il ne reste déjà que peu de chose de valable du strict point de vue artistique.[14]

Mounin is similarly dismissive of Resistance poetry in *Avez-vous lu Char?* (1946). He describes the poetry and the acclaim that it was given during the war as a 'feu de paille' and writes: 'on criait au miracle poétique; et deux ans suffirent à classer cet incident dont il faut bien dire aujourd'hui qu'il ne reste à peu près rien' (p. 145). All that remains in the poetry, he claims, is 'une actualité déjà froide' (p. 145).

The poetry was classified as one of circumstance, produced with the best of intentions for a particular situation, but with no lasting influence or value. In an interview with René Bélance in 1945, Breton states that 'la poésie de circonstance née de la guerre est un phénomène éruptif sans lendemain. (...) [Elle] a perdu dès maintenant tout droit à se maintenir au moins comme genre prépondérant' (*Entretiens*, p. 234). Edmond Humeau, also writing in 1945, claims that 'le poème des actualités a fait époque et son influence est devenue néfaste'.[15] Gaëton Picon describes Resistance literature as '*une littérature de circonstances*', whose 'destin inévitable était de flamber haut et clair mais de s'éteindre rapidement'; he writes that 'la poésie de circonstance, la poésie civique qui a tenté bien des poètes, n'est pas, il faut le reconnaître, une source privilégiée d'inspiration' (*Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française* , p. 159). Emphasis was laid thus on what was seen as the essentially ephemeral nature of Resistance poetry, as a number of Resistance poets themselves noted in a collective article, 'Poésie et défense de l'homme':

> Poésie de circonstance, a-t-on dit non sans mépris. On prétendait par là entacher la poésie de tout ce qu'il y a de périssable, de relatif, d'accidentel dans l'événement, et la priver de ce qui en fait l'objet le plus inexplicable en même temps que le plus évident: la durée. On voulait insinuer que cette poésie s'anéantirait avec l'actualité de son sujet, qu'elle ne survivrait pas au présent, et paraîtrait bientôt aussi dénuée d'intérêt qu'une crise de dent infantile.
>
> (*Almanach des Lettres françaises*, p. 75)

So, only a few years after its conception, an entire body of poetry was dismissed, without much discussion. Resistance poetry was widely viewed as a set of historical documents, as journalism (Gros refers to the poets as 'journalistes enthousiastes'[16]), as a series of anecdotal *témoignages* or eye-witness accounts, and most of all as a monument to the good intentions of the poets and their fellow Resisters - 'toute une littérature inefficace et touchante de la bonne volonté'.[17] It was simply not regarded as poetry, and consequently none of it received the critical attention that is normally accorded to poetry. The peremptory dismissal of Resistance poetry was neither supported nor challenged by any close study of the poems themselves.

It is worth noting that during the war, Resistance poets, and critics in favour of their work, paid just as little attention to the poetry *as such* , and concentrated instead on the emotional impact of its content - its *actualité* and its value as a record of human courage and suffering. (Words, of course, were precious during the war, and reviews of poetry were themselves an important means of bolstering morale and furthering the Resistance cause.) Take, for example, Georges Anex's review of Aragon's *Le Crève-coeur* in 1942:

> Devant le fait brut, Aragon n'explique rien ni même ne s'étonne; il ne cherche pas à dire *autre chose*: il nous livre ce *Crève-coeur* comme un document (...). Il nous le livre aussi comme un témoignage. Un homme, ici, témoigne pour tous les autres; un poète écrit sous la dictée de l'événement, par une obligation majeure acculée à ce chant, à ces mots qu'il ne peut éviter, dans des phrases qui lui sont données.[18]

Aragon's own appraisal of Frénaud's *Les Rois Mages* attends exclusively to the fact that these poems were written in a prisoner-of-war camp.[19] Seghers's review of three poems by Cayrol reads as follows:

> Il *faut* les lire. Quand un jeune poète écrit en 1942, et dans quelles conditions un poème comme celui-ci, c'est un devoir que de l'écouter. A d'autres la critique et le regret de l'actuel trop présent. N'est-ce pas le temps de préférer l'homme à ses figures![20]

Just as Seghers refers here to the suspension of his own critical instinct, so Pierre Robin asks just after the Liberation: 'En face de pareils témoignages, qui aurait le coeur de se livrer au jeu de la critique littéraire?' (*La Poésie française au service de la Résistance*, p. 41). At the beginning of this study of Resistance poetry, Robin states openly that he is acting more as a historian than as a literary critic, arguing that 'le moment n'est pas encore venu de juger; il nous suffit aujourd'hui d'écouter les Témoins' (p. 8). The events and situations expressed in Resistance poetry were often so emotive, and of such immediate relevance to the wartime reader that, as Henri Hell put it in 1943, 'le regard critique s'en trouve obscurci'.[21] Jean Pérus comments that when faced with Resistance poetry, the critic of 1944 'se sent contraint de laisser là les mystères de la poésie pure: ce n'est plus la nature de la poésie qu'il lui faut, c'est son

contenu'.[22] Henri Hell notes this tendency with a certain disapproval. He writes in 1943:

> Nulle époque n'a eu plus que la nôtre l'amour du témoignage humain. De plus en plus on demande à la littérature un document humain. Peu importe la valeur artistique de l'oeuvre, qu'elle soit informée ou non, élaborée ou non. Qu'elle soit simplement humaine et l'on dira d'une oeuvre qu'elle est belle.[23]

The fact that many wartime critics only had eyes for the content of Resistance poetry, and valued it above all as a 'document humain', was no doubt responsible in part for the lasting impression that it was *merely* a 'document humain', with no 'artistic' value. Ironically, these poets and critics seem to have played into the hands of those who dismissed Resistance poetry after the war.

It is important, however, that while they were personally unwilling or unable to abstract themselves from its highly charged, emotive content - and they make no bones about this - Seghers and Robin, for example, both point towards a future reassessment of Resistance poetry. The implication behind Seghers's 'à d'autres la critique' and Robin's 'le moment n'est pas encore venu de juger' is that at some later date, sufficiently distanced from the events it chronicled, critics would be able to apply to Resistance poetry what Robin calls the 'jeu de la critique littéraire'. It is to Breton's credit that, unlike many others writing in the aftermath of the war, and despite his instinctive dislike of poetry of circumstance, he reserved judgement on Resistance poetry, arguing in 1945 that more distance was needed in order to judge it clearly: 'cette "poésie" en tant que telle n'est sans doute pas à rejeter en bloc. Nous manquons de recul pour dire à coup sûr si, de tout cet éphémère, on a réussi ou non à faire jaillir de l'éternel' (*Entretiens*, p. 234).

It was left to critics of a future generation, far removed from the war, to judge Resistance poetry with equanimity, and to measure it by the same yardstick as all other poetry is measured.

In the 1970s, there was a noticeable revival of interest in Resistance poetry in France, which began with the publication of Seghers's 660-page chronicle and anthology, *La Résistance et ses poètes* . This was followed by a special issue of

Europe on 'La poésie et la Résistance', which includes an anthology of popular Resistance poetry and songs, a series of articles detailing the aims of Resistance poetry and some of its major themes, and a few short essays on the work of some individual Resistance poets. Jacques Gaucheron, who contributed to this special issue of *Europe*, went on to publish his own study of Resistance poetry in 1979. Gaucheron's *La Poésie, la Résistance* is largely a narrative account of Resistance poetry. It raises some important questions in regard to the poetry and the criticism it received after the war, and points the way usefully towards a further, more analytic study of the subject. Special issues of *Poésie 1* on 'Les Poètes de la revue *Fontaine*' (1978)[24] and 'Les poètes de la revue *Confluences*' (1982),[25] are further evidence of the renewed interest in Resistance poetry, and of the will to have it viewed in a more favourable light. Modelled on Seghers's *La Résistance et ses poètes*, they are collections of some of the wartime and post-war poetry published in *Fontaine* and *Confluences*, compiled and narrated by the former editors of these magazines. The purpose of all of these works was to bring to the attention of the French public a body of poetry that had been widely ignored since the war, and to restore its damaged reputation.

The rehabilitation of Resistance poetry was continued in Britain in the early 1980s. Ian Higgins's *Anthology of Second World War French Poetry* was published in 1982. The stated intention of this anthology was to introduce a new readership to a 'lost' generation of French poets; the Introduction encourages a questioning of the received view (or myth) of Resistance poetry. This was complemented by a number of articles by Ian Higgins on the Resistance poetry of Francis Ponge and on some of the major themes in the poetry. These were the first critical works to explore the phenomenon of Resistance poetry (and to explode its myth) through detailed analysis of individual poems. They remain the only examples of such criticism.

In 1985, Maxwell Adereth published *Aragon. The Resistance Poems*, which helped challenge the common view that Aragon (like Eluard) was primarily a Surrealist poet who wrote a lesser kind of poetry during the war.[26]

To the best of my knowledge, there have been only two scholarly studies of Resistance poetry: J. Moore's M.A. dissertation, 'The National Psychosis: Problems of Resistance through Poetry in France, 1940-1944' (Nottingham, 1965), and N. Court's M. Phil. dissertation, 'Poetry of the French Resistance, with special reference to the contribution of Paul Eluard' (Essex, 1977). Both of these studies are marked by the prejudices that affected Resistance poetry immediately after the war, despite the fact that their authors hail from a different generation and a different culture. Moore regrets the low quality of much of the poetry, the editorial indiscrimination of those who published it, and the general reduction of poetry to its lowest common denominator - an interest in theme alone. Court, who concentrates almost exclusively on Eluard's wartime poetry, asserts the superiority of Eluard's surrealist writing, arguing, as many post-war critics did, that during the war Eluard's work lost in 'poetic' quality what it gained in directness. Both Moore and Court imply an essential ideal of poetry from which Resistance poetry deviates; like most other critics of Resistance poetry, they fail to define this ideal, and their condemnations remain impressionistic.

The principles on which the defence and criticism of Resistance poetry is generally based have yet to be outlined. The aim of this present thesis is to reexpound in more detail and with a wider range of reference the debate concerning Resistance poetry, and to draw attention in so doing to a number of poets who are not widely known, or who are not known as Resistance poets. This is not an exhaustive study of Resistance poetry, which is a vast field, still largely untapped. Given that space is limited, it was necessary to reach a compromise here. I have concentrated on the work of a sample of poets that is wide enough to be representative, yet not so wide as to give the impression that the poetry is only there as a set of documents, or to lose the poets' individual voices. Reference is made most often to the work of Aragon, Char, Eluard, Emmanuel, Frénaud, Marcenac, Masson, Seghers and Tardieu. There is additional and sometimes important reference made to the poems and other writings of Audisio, Bérimont, Borne, Cassou, Cayrol, Desnos, Guillevic, Jouve, Ponge and Supervielle.

This study is not intended to be a contribution to the theory of poetry. It applies pragmatically a concept of poetry which seems to cover what most people agree to be poetry, and which seems implied in or to underlie the accusations that Resistance poetry is *not* poetry. By demonstrating through a thematic and formal analysis of a selection of Resistance poetry that it is in fact no different from poetry as implicitly understood by those who have criticised or dismissed it, I hope to establish Resistance poetry as a fit subject for further scholarly study, in the fields of literary history and literary theory.

There were no theorists amongst the critics who, both during and after the war, questioned the right of Resistance poetry to be considered as poetry. They conducted their criticisms on the basis of an undefined concept of poetry which, in their minds, was not realised in Resistance poetry, or in the belief that poetry has certain necessary attributes, which they failed to see in Resistance poetry. It is essential to look now at the major accusations levelled against Resistance poetry, and to distil from these a working definition of poetry. This can then be applied, systematically, to the body of poetry that was rejected with little discussion and no analysis.

The criticisms of Resistance poetry fall into four main categories. It was dismissed, as we have seen, as poetry of circumstance; it was also condemned as *poésie engagée*, which promoted a particular social and political cause; its patriotic (and religious) content was taken as a measure of its conformism; these criticisms were nearly all resumed in the general accusation that Resistance poetry was linguistically conservative. Some representative examples are given below.

Critics often associated poetry of circumstance with *poésie engagée*, since they understood that it was by dint of being committed to a particular political cause that Resistance poetry took as their subject-matter the events that occurred in wartime France. The two terms were synonymous for Gaëton Picon, for example, who writes of 'la poésie de la circonstance historique ou engagée'.[27] C.A. Hackett describes Resistance poetry as 'a "poetry of circumstance" lacking permanent value because it was - to use a recently fashionable word - " engagée"'.[28] In a review of Emmanuel's

La Liberté guide nos pas, Henri Agel laments the *actualité* of some of Emmanuel's Resistance poetry, and argues that this anecdotal vision was one of the dangers inherent in committed poetry:

> Si quelques-uns de ses chants atteignent ce niveau d'une vérité éternelle, éternellement jeune et vivante (...), il en est d'autres qui se laissent embourber dans l'actuel, dans le pittoresque ou l'anecdotique de l'événement. Osons dire que peu de poètes contemporains ont su dépasser les frontières dangereuses d'une "poésie engagée" pour se hausser jusqu'à cette zone où le chant se décante et se purifie sans perdre son tragique ni son humanité.[29]

Maurice Nadeau writes: 'Sous le vocable "Résistance" (...) l'on voit se profiler une activité poétique liée à l'activité politique et limitée à l'événement';[30] Jean Paris makes a similar association between commitment and circumstance in the Introduction to his *Anthologie de la poésie nouvelle*; 'd'engagements en engagements, au nom d'une liberté de plus en plus ponctuelle, l'art en arrive à ces génuflexions devant les circonstances, à cette idolâtrie de l'actualité' (p. 41).

Underlying many objections to committed poetry of circumstance appears to be the idea that poetry, in order to remain poetry, should be 'faithful to itself', written for its own sake; and this idea itself contains a twin implication: (1) that poetry might best acquire lasting value by being these things; (2) that it could best be these things by dealing with eternal, lasting matters. In serving some immediate cause - the fight against Nazism[31] - Resistance poets were accused of alienating the freedom of poetry, viewed as an end in itself. For example, in response to an open letter from Seghers, whose appeal for contributions to *Poètes casqués 40* was worded 'nous voulons croire à la vie, à la possibilité d'une grande communauté humaine, à la fraternité des hommes',[32] André Suarès insists on the disinterest of poetry, on its service of beauty alone, and writes: 'La poésie est une réalité parfaite: elle ne pactise pas avec le mensonge politique, et c'est ce que vous faites en ce moment'.[33] Like Suarès, G.-E. Clancier emphasises the need for art to remain independent of temporal concerns. He argues that 'l'homme se confie à l'oeuvre d'art pour s'élever au-dessus de l'éphémère, de l'inachevé', and regrets that in 1942 '[on voudrait] assigner à la fonction artistique un but plus immédiat'.[34] He writes:

> ne voyons-nous pas de sincères serviteurs de l'art et d'excellents artistes en venir à réduire l'art à une fonction de défense? L'humain étant profondément menacé, l'art, pensent-ils, doit le protéger: il devient donc une arme, un contre-poison. On souhaite alors qu'il suive tel chemin plutôt que tel autre; que la poésie, le roman, la peinture se fassent plus directs; qu'une certaine attitude conditionne la création. On aliène la liberté de l'art, pur le bon motif, bien entendu, mais on l'aliène tout de même.[35]

He concludes that it is 'en étant d'abord fidèle à lui-même et aux exigences de son oeuvre que l'artiste parviendra, tout naturellement, à la meilleure défense de l'humain'.[36]

The surrealist poet, Benjamin Péret, puts forward much the same view as this in *Le Déshonneur des poètes*. First published in Mexico in 1945, this remains the most damning criticism that has been made of Resistance poetry.[37] Péret accused Resistance poets of having betrayed the meaning of poetry by submitting it to 'leurs fins immédiates' (p. 73). He argues that poetry is by definition revolutionary and subversive (p. 75), and that the revolution inherent in poetry is a continual, open-ended process, with no definite end but further revolution: the poet is an 'inventeur pour qui la découverte n'est que le moyen d'atteindre une nouvelle découverte' (p. 75). By submitting their poetry to the service of the Resistance cause, whose aim was to free France from Nazism, Resistance poets had ceased to be revolutionary in this permanent sense, and their work could not therefore be considered as poetry:

> Tout "poème" qui exalte une "liberté" volontairement indéfinie (...) cesse d'abord d'être un poème et par suite constitue un obstacle à la libération totale de l'homme, car il le trompe en lui montrant une "liberté" qui dissimule de nouvelles chaînes,
> (p. 88)

'L'honneur de ces poètes', Péret writes, 'consiste à cesser d'être poètes pour devenir des agents de publicité' (p. 83). Much like Clancier, Péret contends that 'la poésie n'a pas à intervenir dans le débat autrement que par son action propre, sa signification culturelle' (p. 83) - for, he argues:

> de tout poème *authentique* s'échappe un souffle de liberté entière et agissante, même si cette liberté n'est pas évoquée sous son aspect politique ou social, et, par là, contribue à la libération effective de l'homme. (pp. 88-9)

Péret saw proof of the ultimately oppressive, reactionary and therefore 'anti-poetic' nature of Resistance poetry in the fact that their desire to serve the Resistance cause had led poets to promote the 'dogmas' of nationalism and Christianity. He notes that the two are often voiced together in the poetry - as if, he says, to show that 'dogme religieux et dogme nationaliste ont une commune origine et une fonction sociale identique' (p. 85). The content of Resistance poetry was, in Péret's mind, undoubtedly reactionary. By invoking the church and the French *patrie*, Resistance poets had sided once and for all with 'les forces de régression' (p. 84).

Resistance poetry has often been attacked for its conservative patriotic content and compared with the chauvinist doggerel of Paul Déroulède. Surrealists were particularly dismayed by this apparent conformism, and attacked it violently. They directed most of their attacks on Eluard and Aragon, who seemed to have betrayed the aims of the movement to which they had once belonged. In 1941, Breton refused to publish any of his work alongside that of Aragon, whom he describes as 'le disciple de Déroulède, le nouveau Lavedan, le libertin qui couche avec Jeanne d'Arc'.[38] In a collective letter to Breton, written in 1943, members of the Paris-based surrealist group 'La Main à la Plume' refer to 'les déroulades de Messieurs Aragon, Eluard et Cie', and describe Eluard in the following terms:

> Patriote revanchard, (...) sujet à des réactions de concierge antiboche et d'épicier cocardier, jetant une poésie déjà fort compromise dans le ronron des romances ou la facile nostalgie bêtifiante, (...) P.E. apparaît comme l'un des plus grands responsables de la farouche stupidité nationaliste et christique qui s'est abattue sur la France depuis la défaite et qui risque (...) de lancer dans la voie de la pire réaction le sursaut populaire auquel nous travaillons tous.[39]

Witness also this more light-hearted attack on Aragon in 1944 by E.L.T. Mesens, a leading Belgian surrealist:

> Tu seras décoré par la France de Pétain
> Ou par celle de Gigaulle
> Et tu seras académichien
> Docteur ès Rimes et fauteuil roulant
>
> Tu sera chanté par Lebrun
> Ou bien imposé par Marty

Tu seras déclaré d'utilité publique
(...)
O! Déroulède des faubourgs (*Troisième front*, p. 20)

During the war, Resistance poetry was also criticised for its patriotism in the collaborationist press. One suspects that these criticisms (which are again centred mainly on Aragon) are actually questioning the nature or the sincerity of the patriotism voiced in the poetry. What comes across, rather surprisingly, is a condemnation of the poetry's conservative, chauvinistic content. Brasillach dismisses the idea of a *renouveau poétique* in 1942, saying that 'si nous regardons de près ces jolis jeux, (...) nous n'y découvrirons rien de neuf. Aragon, qui fut tchékiste et anti-militariste, s'est mué en poète à la façon de Déroulède'.[40] Lucien Terroy refers to Aragon's poems as 'les productions ridicules d'un chauvinisme délirant',[41] and Lucien Combelle declares:

> Louis Aragon est maintenant l'aède de la France du Maréchal, le poète de la cité. Il en a plein la bouche des mots de patrie, sacrifice, grandeur et catholicisme. Il souffle dans le clairon de la poésie française. Il la prostitue, il est son souteneur. Et la malheureuse se laisse faire.[42]

It will be noted that Combelle, much like Péret, points to an association of patrotism and Christianity here. So, too, does Thierry Maulnier, writing in *L'Action française* in 1942. Maulnier is as dismissive as Brasillach of 'l'abondante production poétique de ces deux dernières années', and for much the same reason:

> je ne vois rien qui permette d'annoncer l'aurore d'une nouvelle ère poétique dans les épanchements verbaux obscurément religieux ou patriotiques, qui paraissent renouveler jusque dans leur gaucherie et leur grandiloquence - avec une structure moins jeune - ceux de Péguy et de Hugo.[43]

For its patriotism, and for its invocations of Christianity, Resistance poetry was roundly condemned as presenting 'what is ultimately a conventional view canonised by tradition and familiar to any reader'.[44]

The conformism of its content was matched, in the critics' eyes, by a linguistic conformism. When Péret dismisses Resistance poetry as a '"poésie" de propagande' (*Dés* 80)[45], he refers both to its 'reactionary' content and to its 'conventional' use of language. A lot of Resistance poetry - though by no means all of it - reverted to

traditional prosodic forms. This is taken by Péret as proof positive of its conservatism:

> ce n'est pas un hasard si [ces poètes] ont cru devoir, en leur immense majorité, revenir à la rime et à l'alexandrin classiques. La forme et le contenu gardent nécessairement entre eux un rapport des plus étroits et, dans ces "vers", réagissent l'un sur l'autre dans une course éperdue à la pire réaction. (*Dés* 82)

Breton was similarly critical of the use of 'fixed' forms in Resistance poetry. In a lecture given at Yale in 1942, he regrets this regressive move of certain former surrealists, arguing that it ran contrary both to the principle of freedom exalted by surrealists, and to the progress of French poetry since Romanticism:

> La liberté étant, dans le Surréalisme, révérée à l'état pur, c'est-à-dire prônée sous toutes ses formes, il y avait, bien entendu, maintes manières d'en déméríter. Selon moi c'est par exemple en avoir démérité que d'être revenu, comme certains des anciens surréalistes, aux formes fixes en poésie, alors qu'il est démontré, tout particulièrement en langue française - et le rayonnement exceptionnel de la poésie française depuis le romantisme autorise à généraliser cette façon de voir - que la qualité de l'expression lyrique n'a bénéficié de rien tant que de la volonté d'affranchissement de règles caduques.[46]

It is with the same disapproval that C.F. Chabrun notes in 1943 a widespread 'retour à la rime, au pas cadencé du verbe', which, in his mind, constitutes a 'méconnaissance claironnant et prétentieuse du vertigineux enthousiasme qui préside à la création poétique'.[47] Maurice Nadeau writes that the poetry of the Resistance 'ne va pas dans le sens d'une conquête, mais vers l'utilisation de richesses déjà conquises'.[48] The criticism that this poetry forges no new ground is apparent also in Julien Benda's reference in 1946 to the 'récents poèmes de MM. Aragon et Eluard, qui pourraient être de Hugo ou de Madame de Noailles',[49] and in H.-J. Dupuy's statement that

> la nouvelle poésie, délaissant les extravagances et les affranchissements obtenus dans l'entre-deux-guerres, revient à l'emploi des moules les plus usés de la métrique classique: l'alexandrin et même le sonnet.[50]

L.-G. Gros suggests, as Péret did in *Le Déshonneur des poètes*, that this unadventurous use of language in Resistance poetry is the direct result of the committed stance taken by Resistance poets. In adopting a certain moral attitude, he

claimed, the poets had 'renié tout esprit de recherche'.[51] He writes that their commitment to a particular cause had led Resistance poets to abandon linguistic experimentation, which he clearly holds to be an essential feature of poetic expression:

> Le désir de communication (...) a emporté sur celui de la recherche et l'expression poétique, accueillant désormais tous les procédés d'une rhétorique naguère répudiée, est devenue moins une fin qu'un instrument, et dans certains cas une arme. Le laboratoire s'est transformé en tribune.
>
> (*Poètes contemporains*, p. 33)

Obviously, there is no single concept of poetry behind these various criticisms. There is, however, a common, implicit understanding that the poetic quality of a text lies in the use and foregrounding of language. Underlying the objection to Resistance poetry as poetry of circumstance is the assumption that it relied uniquely on the impact of its subject-matter, and that, anxious above all to communicate the events that occurred in wartime France, the poets had paid little attention to their use of language. Hence the accusation that these poems were merely documents, pieces of journalism, or *témoignages* (all forms of discourse in which expression is typically subordinated to content). The implication was that the content of Resistance poetry was foregrounded *at the expense of* expression. This idea is also present in the objection to committed poetry. It was assumed that in using their words to promote a cause, Resistance poets had renounced the freedom to write poetry that would be 'faithful to itself' - a poetry, it is implied, in which *expression* is foregrounded at the expense of *content*. The unwillingness to accept that poetry can be committed (and remain poetry) issues, it seems, from a confusion between committed poetry and propaganda, in which the message is all-important, and the language which conveys it unadventurous and inconspicuous. It is obviously important here to distinguish poetry from other forms of discourse: hence the need for it to be clearly defined.

I would accept the two notions which those hostile to Resistance poetry explicitly or implicitly see as essential to discussion of poetry, namely expression and content. I would, however, reject the apparent dualism of these critics' use of the notions, whereby one may be considered without reference to, and as separate from, the other.

Against this dualism, I would argue, as a working definition, that poetry is utterance in which expression and content stand in a relation of mutual implication, and which, through some form and degree of violence done to language, *draws attention* not only to this mutual implication, but also to that of world and language. Language, in other words, is foregrounded in poetry only as being inseparable from its referent. The unconformist, inventive nature of poetry lies in the fact that it makes conspicuous the interdependence both of expression and content and of world and language - and this can be effected equally well in a poem written in classical alexandrines as in one that is written in *vers libres*.

For the critics quoted above, poetry has also a number of necessary attributes. It must be eternal and lasting (as implied in the criticism that resistance poetry is ephemeral 'poetry of circumstance'), and it must be permanently subversive and revolutionary (hence the objection to its 'reactionary' content). It is perhaps only the unanalytical quality of their criticisms that permits it, but it is nevertheless striking that conservatives like Brasillach and Maulnier and nonconformists like Péret and Breton should meet in applying *both* these criteria in their criticism of Resistance poetry.

It should be said that, poetry of circumstance or not, Resistance poetry deals with certain fundamental questions, which are of lasting relevance. It was concerned above all with freedom, with the type of land that these poets wanted to live in and with the way that they wanted man to be, and it draws attention to the role of language in defining and bringing about freedom, France and man. These issues are no less eternally or universally relevant because they were raised at a particular time and in a particular place.

When Péret argued in *Le Déshonneur des poètes* that poetry must be permanently subversive, in both expression and content, he tended to ignore the situation in which Resistance (and all other) poetry is written, giving the impression that poetic texts exist somehow in a void. On the surface, Resistance poetry *is* conventional, as Péret claims, for it talks about France and it talks about religion. What Péret failed to recognise was that these conventional subjects became subversive and nonconformist

in the changed situation of wartime France, when Resistance poets said different things about the French *patrie* and religion (and in a very different way) from what the establishment expected and asked for.

By examining the main thematic features of Resistance poetry, I hope to illustrate that this writing does indeed possess the attributes of lastingness and permanent subversiveness which appear to be commonly associated with poetry. Having outlined these main thematic features, I shall then demonstrate in the final chapter, and in a concluding commentary, that if by poetry is understood utterance which foregrounds language as being inseparable from referent, and in which expression and content stand, conspicuously, in a relation of mutual implication, then Resistance poetry must be recognised as poetry, and not, or not only, as a set of documents chronicling the history of the French Resistance.

The thesis comprises four chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter I outlines the main characteristics of the committed poetry that was practised by Resistance poets. It aims to dispel the received view of *poésie engagée* as poetry which expounds and promotes a fixed creed. A brief outline of the surrealist view of poetry (which Resistance poets abandoned) precedes a description of the three major features of committed poetry, as advocated by Resistance poets. This poetry is described as one which is deliberately accessible, both in its use of language and in its choice of subject-matter. It is qualified as poetry of circumstance, which takes as its subject-matter political and historical events. Finally, it is stressed that the object of the poets' commitment, and the common cause of all Resistance poetry, is not any predetermined ideal (as Péret, for one, suggests), but a particular concept of man as a circumstantial being - an ideal that is constantly, therefore, open to change and redefinition.

The poets' defence of man is mediated through their defence of the French *patrie*; their patriotism was not an end in itself, but a means of achieving the freedom necessary for their open-ended ideal of man to be realised. Chapter II examines the concept of *patrie* that is voiced in Resistance poetry, and challenges the view that its

patriotism was chauvinistic and its content therefore conservative. The word 'France' is used generally in this study as it is typically used, to denote a political entity defined by national boundaries. Chapter II illustrates, however, that during the war, the word 'France' itself became an issue, meaning something entirely different to Resisters and Collaborators. When discussing France as an issue, the term *le pays réel* is used to denote the Resisters' ideal of the French *patrie*, and the term *le pays légal* is used to denote the concept of France that was promoted officially, by the Collaboration. A brief account of the development of French nationalism from 1789 is followed by an outline of the main aims of Vichy's National Revolution. The poets' inability to accept this idea of France, promoted by the establishment, is examined through the related themes of exile, loss, and disorientation that inform much of the poetry written in the period. The poets' own ideal concept of *patrie* is then examined as it unfolds through the themes of France's historical, cultural and natural heritage and, finally, through those of love and *fraternité*. It is stressed throughout that *le pays réel* is viewed by the poets as a spiritual territory, and that their defence of France is a defence of a universal ideal of freedom and *fraternité*. France is presented as a *patrie* of humanity and as the guarantor of a certain concept of man.

Chapter III examines this concept of man, which has been foregrounded as the ultimate object of the poets' commitment. The various parts of this chapter highlight, from different angles, the importance of preserving individuality, and of rejecting any essentialist account of man. The poets' anti-essentialist descriptions of man are presented as a vital corrective to the strongly essentialist concept of a totalitarian man that was promoted by Nazism. The opening section examines the poets' opposition to essentialism and totalitarianism, expressed through descriptions of man breaking away constantly from any fixed identity. This is followed by an account of the connection that is drawn in the poetry between Nazism and the absurd. It is argued that the poets' resistance to Nazism is at the same time a resistance to the absurd (of which Nazism was seen as both symptom and manifestation). The third section of the chapter outlines the poets' idea of man as a circumstantial being, whose 'meaning' is not defined or given, but is a function of the relations established between self and

circumstances. This dialectical view of man is upheld in the following section, which describes the notion of *fraternité* in Resistance poetry. *Fraternité* is defined here as a reciprocity of self and others - a sense of belonging to a community, each member of which has similar needs and rights, the most important of which is individual freedom. The promotion of this ideal of *fraternité* is shown to be counteractive to the ethic of extreme individualism and extreme collectivism that was practised by Nazism. To illustrate the idea of *fraternité* as resistance to Nazism, reference is made here to a number of poems commemorating the executions of a group of Communist hostages at Châteaubriant in 1941. (These poems are reproduced in the Appendix, along with a group of poems commemorating the death of Gabriel Péri.) The final section of the chapter examines an idea, often voiced in the poetry, that Nazism is an evil that is to some extent inherent in man, and as such must permanently be resisted.

The defence of both France and man is inseparable in Resistance poetry from a defence of language. Chapter IV outlines this defence, taking language both as a central theme and as a vital component of the poetry. The thematic study here is complemented by commentaries on two short poems by Emmanuel, and by brief, illustrative analyses of extracts from the poems that are reproduced in the Appendix. Attention is drawn first of all to the particular problems of expression that were faced by Resistance poets. There was the problem of describing the 'indescribable' horror of certain events that occurred in France during the war. This is illustrated by a commentary on Emmanuel's 'Près de la fosse', which witnesses the discovery of a mass grave in the Vercors in 1944. The poets were also conscious of the problem of how to express themselves in a language that had, in their minds, been corrupted by the use to which it was put by the establishment. The option of silence was discarded by Resistance poets, but the theme of silence is an important one in the poetry. It is illustrated by a commentary on another Emmanuel poem, 'Les dents serrées'. The largest part of the chapter is devoted to the poets' own use of language, which consciously counteracted the way that language was being used in France, officially. The use of language in Resistance poetry is described here as an affirmation of life, of truth, and of *fraternité*. Illustrative reference is made to the poems commemorating the

Châteaubriant hostages and Gabriel Péri. It is in this final chapter, which involves an analytic as well as a thematic approach to language in Resistance poetry, that the criticism that Resistance poetry is *not* poetry is firmly met and challenged.

This challenge is continued, and the thesis concluded, by a detailed analysis of Tardieu's 'Oradour',

NOTES

Full details of publication of the books and articles referred to in these and all subsequent notes can be found in the bibliography.

1. Certainly, this is the impression that was given in reviews of poetry written during and after the war. While no conclusive statistical survey has been carried out, there are certain figures available which support this impression. See, for example, H. Lottman, *La Rive gauche du Front Populaire à la Guerre Froide*, (pp. 209, 253), K. Kohut (ed.), *Literatur der Résistance und Kollaboration in Frankreich*, (vol. 2, pp. 102-3).

2. 'Quatre aspects de la poésie', *Confluences*, 12 (juillet 1942), p. 63.

3. 'A propos de la "Nouvelle poésie française"', *Fontaine*, 22 (juin 1942), p. 206.

4. 'Un poète de l'âme et de l'action', *L'Appel*, 30 septembre, 1943, p. 4.

5. *L'Action française*, 3 juillet 1944, p. 2.

6. *Je suis partout*, 31 juillet 1942, p. 6.

7. *Les Lettres françaises*, 158 (30 mai 1947), p. 4.

8. 'La Situation poétique', *Cahiers de poésie*, 4-5 (août 1943), p. 4.

9. Quoted by C. Sernet, 'Chronique', *Méridien*, 4 (novembre-décembre 1942), p. 32.

10. 'Les Evénements et la création littéraire', *Le Mot d'ordre*, 18 juillet 1942, p. 2.

11. 'Examen des revues', *Fontaine*, 24 (octobre 1942), p. 488.

12. 'Réflexions sur une nouvelle génération poétique', *Confluences*, 4 (mai 1945), p. 424.

13. 'Du côté des poètes', *Les Lettres françaises*, 68 (11 août 1945), p. 3.

14. 'Poésie de l'événement', *Renaissances*, 15 (octobre 1945), p. 140.

15. '*Dignes de vivre*', *Paru*, 6 (mars 1945), p. 58.

16. *Poètes contemporains*, p. 40.

17. G. Mounin, *Avez-vous lu Char?*, p. 145.

18. '*Le Crève-coeur*', *Suisse contemporaine*, 4 (avril 1942), p. 351.

19. 'Un poète libéré, André Frénaud', (published under the pseudonym of Georges Meyzargues), *Poésie 42*, 4 (septembre 1942), pp. 31-41.

20. 'Revue des revues', *Poésie 43*, 13 (mars-avril 1943), p. 102.

21. 'Sur les poètes prisonniers', *Fontaine*, 31 (novembre-décembre 1943), p. 106.

22. 'Le Poète et le peuple', *Poésie 44*, 19 (mai-juin 1944), p. 76.

23. 'Sur les poètes prisonniers'(see note 21), p. 108.

24. Edited by Max-Pol Fouchet.

25. Edited by René Tavernier.

26. See, for example, M. Nadeau, *Littérature présente* (p. 310), Anna Balakian, *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute* (pp. 217, 220), and R. Nugent, *Paul Eluard* (p. 113).

27. *Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française*, p. 184.

28. *Anthology of Modern French Poetry*, p. xxxviii.

29. '*La Liberté guide nos pas*', *Paru*, 27 (février 1947), p. 38.

30. 'Dangers de la poésie appliquée', *Le Figaro littéraire*, 28 octobre 1944, p.2.

31. The object of the poets' resistance is identified throughout this thesis as Nazism rather than Fascism. 'Fascism', as I understand it and use it here, refers strictly to a particular political system: a one-party, corporative state, opposed to democracy and opposed to Communism. 'Nazism' refers to that distinct brand of fascism which promoted a creed of racial determinism.

32. 'Deux lettres d'André Suarès', *Poètes casqués 40*, 4 (juillet 1940), p. 4.

33. Ibid., p. 6.

34. 'Contre-poison', *Le Figaro*, 22 août 1942, p. 3.

35. Ibid., p. 3.

36. Ibid., p. 3.

37. Péret's attack is centred on *L'Honneur des poètes*, an anthology of Resistance poetry compiled and introduced by M. Simon, and published in Rio de Janeiro in 1944.

38. In L. Scheler (ed.), *La Grande espérance des poétes*, p. 53.

39. 'Lettre à André Breton', in J. Pierre (ed.), *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives*, vol.2, p. 16.

40. 'Y a-t-il un renouveau de la Poésie?', *Je suis partout*, 31 juillet 1942, p. 6.

41. 'Les Jeanfoutres du surréalisme', *Révolution Nationale*, 26 avril 1942, p.3.

42. 'Pitres ou traîtres', *Je suis partout*, 20 septembre 1941, p. 8.

43. 'Maurice Fombeure.-D'amour et d'aventure', *L'Action française*, 10 novembre 1942, p. 3.

44. C.M. Bowra, *Poetry and politics*, p. 128.

45. For abbreviated titles see list of abbreviations, pp(i) & (ii)

46. *La Situation du surréalisme entre les deux guerres*, p. 11.

47. 'La Situation poétique', Cahiers de poésie, 4-5 (août 1943), p. 4.

48. 'Réflexions sur une nouvelle génération poétique', *Confluences*, 4 (mai 1945), p. 426.

49. *Non possumus: A propos d'une certaine poésie moderne*, p. 8.

50. 'Poésie et l'événement', *Renaissances*, 15 (octobre 1945), p. 139.

51. 'Portée et limites d'un témoignage', *Cahiers du sud*, 250 (décembre 1942), p. 291.

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A FRATERNAL POETRY OF COMMITMENT

> 'L'ignoble mot d'engagement sue une servilité dont la poésie et l'art ont horreur.' (Breton, *La Clé des champs* (1953), p. 130)

> 'La poésie (...) n'a cessé de prendre, depuis deux ans, un plus rude et plus exigeant visage, et si l'on ne parle pas de poésie engagée, c'est qu'une certaine pudeur vous retient d'associer ces vocables.'
> (M.-P. Fouchet, 'Former l'homme ou le réciter?' (1942), p. 49)

INTRODUCTION

With the political crisis in Europe in the late 1930s, and then the war itself, a considerable number of poets were led to reconsider the then dominant view of poetry, as a purely individual and apolitical pursuit, and to practise instead a poetry of commitment, which makes manifest a concern with collective, political issues. The term 'commitment' is used throughout this chapter as an abbreviation of 'social and political commitment'; politics is employed not in the factional sense, but in the sense of 'pertaining to the legislative and executive organisation of society'.[1] I have opted to use the English term 'commitment' here, partly to avoid a surfeit of italicised French and, more significantly, because the connotations of the French word 'engagement' led it to be rejected by certain Resistance poets as an inappropriate and misleading label for their poetry.[2]

My purpose here is to outline the main features of the committed poetry that was advocated and practised by Resistance poets. It should be pointed out that these poets did not propose, either singly or collectively, any properly worked-out *theory* of committed poetry. The idea of committed poetry that is described in this chapter is constructed from a series of urgent demands for such a poetry, made before and during the war, from my knowledge of the practice of Resistance poetry, and from the post-war polemical writings of certain Resistance poets who reflect on the subject of commitment.

It is well known that when Sartre codified a theory of committed literature in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, he argued that only prose could be committed. He conspicuously rejects the idea of committed poetry (pp. 17-25), just as he rejects the idea of committed art or music, and he dismisses in a phrase the example of Resistance poetry (p. 25). Sartre's rejection of commitment in poetry is based on a clear-cut distinction between the use of language in poetry and in prose. Sartre argues that while the prose-writer concentrates on the conceptual aspect of words, and uses them as a means of referring us to something outside themselves, the poet uses words not as signs, but as objects, by allowing the various connotations of a word to coexist within the poem: 'En fait, le poète s'est retiré d'un seul coup du langage-instrument; il a choisi une fois pour toutes l'attitude poétique qui considère les mots comme des choses et non comme des signes' (p. 18). Since the aim of literary commitment, as Sartre conceives of it here, is to reveal and, ultimately, to change reality, the poets' emphasis on words as objects means that poetry cannot be committed:

> Les poètes sont des hommes qui refusent d'*utiliser* le langage. Or, comme c'est dans et par le langage conçu comme une certaine espèce d'instrument que s'opère la recherche de la vérité, il ne faut pas s'imaginer qu'ils visent à discerner le vrai ni à l'exposer. (p. 17)

In later refinements to his theory of commitment, Sartre modified the stand that he takes here, and came full circle to the idea that the essence of commitment lay in the very gratuitousness of the 'pure' arts.[3] As the theory stands, though, in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, it is clear that Sartre bases his distinction between poetry and prose (and his proscription of commitment in poetry) on an ideal of poetry as conceived by the Symbolists. While insisting that his views are based on 'la poésie contemporaine' (p. 47), he fails to take into account the changes which had already taken place in French poetry by 1946. Resistance poets, as we shall see, reacted against the emphasis poets had given to words as objects, and rehabilitated in their poetry the referential, conceptual aspect of language.

There are certain important similarities between the theory of commitment expounded by Sartre, and the practice of committed poetry during the Resistance. They were both prompted by the awareness that the writer is implicated in a particular political and historical situation, both unavoidably and, less passively, through using language. It is worth repeating, however, that Resistance poetry was neither a theory of commitment nor the practice of any such theory. The often hasty demands for committed poetry that were published prior to and during the war are the result of the poets' instinctive sense of involvement in a collective crisis, and of their urgent desire to express and to have expressed in poetry the political events that were foremost in their minds. These demands, and the poetry itself, lack the systematic nature of Sartre's theorising, as well as its conspicuous philosophical underpinning.[4]

Attention is focussed here on three important features of the commitment advocated and practised by Resistance poets in particular. First, there is an outline of the deliberate move away from hermeticism towards a more fraternal type of poetry, widely accessible both in its use of language and in its choice of subject-matter. Second, and following directly from this, committed poetry is described as a poetry of circumstance, which draws attention to the historical, circumstantial nature of man. Finally, emphasis is laid on the open-endedness of the commitment proposed by Resistance poets, which is contrasted with the type of committed literature that was called for during the war in the collaborationist press.

In order to place this committed poetry of the Resistance in a somewhat wider context, I have included a preliminary (and summary) description of the surrealist view of poetry. While surrealism did not hold absolute sway in the 1930s (witness the acknowledged importance of non-surrealists such as Reverdy, Jouve, Saint-John Perse and Claudel), it was certainly the major presence in French poetry in these years leading up to the outbreak of war. The specific nature of Resistance poetry (practised by former surrealists such as Aragon, Eluard, Char and Desnos) will be seen more clearly against this outline of the type of poetry that immediately preceded it.

I THE SURREALIST POSITION

French poetry in the 1930s was influenced substantially by the theories and practice of surrealism. In so far as the committed stance of Resistance poets evolved from the surrealists' view of poetry (and largely as a reaction against it), and in view of the fact that Resistance poetry was criticised by poets who continued as surrealists throughout the war, it is useful here to sketch an outline of that view. I will concentrate mainly on the surrealists' position in regard to the social function of poetry, as formulated in particular by Breton.

The surrealist conception of poetry was linked to an attitude of revolt against society; it had a conscious social aim. Poetry was not viewed by surrealists as a purely aesthetic matter but, in a broad sense, as an ethical and political one as well. Poetry, the surrealists insist, is not just a means of expression - it is a revolutionary way of thinking, or 'une manière de vivre'.[5] In a society dominated by a 'realist' or rational mode of thought (*le penser dirigé*), manifested in an obsession with technological progress and productivity, and in a restrictive morality, the surrealists dedicated their work to an exploration of the unconscious and *le penser non dirigé*. Poetic inspiration had its source in this primitive, associative thought that was embedded in the unconscious mind - and in so far as this is a faculty common to everyone, the surrealists believed that poetry could be made by all. They believed also that poetry was linked to social revolution, in that it showed people that there were alternative ways of thinking, and expressed desires that demanded to be satisfied in the real world.

Initially, the surrealists felt that they could bring about a subjective, idealist revolution unaided, by denouncing those institutions and values which inhibited the desires that reside in the unconscious mind. Absolute revolt was valued much more highly than any particular political revolt, and in their service of absolute freedom, surrealists refused at first to identify themselves with any real revolutionary cause. This changed in 1925 after the outbreak of the Rif war, when the surrealist group, on

Breton's instigation, began its conversion to Communism. From 1927 to 1933, most surrealists were active members of the PCF. The group's involvement with Communism was controversial from the outset. Breton's wish to make surrealism an active revolutionary force lost him the support of surrealists such as Artaud, Soupault and Desnos, who felt that he had sacrificed the movement's original aims of unlimited and absolute revolt; similarly, his wish to maintain the independence of surrealism and prevent it from being absorbed by the Communist party caused Naville and Aragon, amongst others, to leave the surrealist group. The surrealists' concern with protecting the independence of their art, and their insistence on individualism and spiritual revolution, destined surrealism and Communism to be uneasy bedfellows. With the exception of Crevel and Tzara, the group was expelled from the PCF in 1933, after *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* published a letter from Alquié deriding the puritanism of Soviet society.[6]

The surrealists' response to the 'Front rouge' affair in 1932 made manifest the conflicting interests of surrealism and Communism, and revealed very clearly the surrealist view of poetry. It also brought up certain objections to 'poetry of circumstance' which Breton and Péret would raise again in their criticisms of Resistance poetry.

In January 1932, Aragon was prosecuted for sedition on account of his inflammatory communist poem, 'Front rouge'.[7] The surrealists rallied to his defence, gathering over three hundred signatures in a petition which was prefaced by a collective text entitled *L'Affaire Aragon*;[8] the views expounded in this text were developed by Breton in *Misère de la poésie*.[9] There are two points raised in Breton's pamphlet that are worth retaining here. First, his contention that a poem (as an automatic text) cannot be judged on its content, and second, that Aragon's poem represents a step backwards for poetry in its return to a *sujet extérieur*. There is a basic and obvious contradiction here: Breton's allegiance to another eminent surrealist leads him to defend Aragon in the name of an idea of poetry from which 'Front rouge' conspicuously deviates. While 'Front rouge' is obviously not an automatic text,

Breton argues that inflammatory phrases such as 'Camarades descendez les flics' are immunised against literal interpretation by virtue of their association in the poem with other phrases, such as 'Les astres descendent familièrement sur la terre', where, he claims, 'la question de ce sens littéral ne se pose pas'.[10] As a whole, the poem functions as an automatic text; it cannot therefore be judged on rational terms. Breton insists here that this is not a new attitude, developed specifically to defend Aragon's case, but a simple restatement of the position outlined in the first Manifesto of Surrealism, where he had argued that poets could not be held morally or legally liable for automatic texts, which recorded the utterances of their unconscious.

Much more than a defence of Aragon, *Misère de la poésie* is a defence of the surrealist view of poetry against those (including Aragon) who, in Breton's mind, would sacrifice poetry to the needs of Communist propaganda. This becomes clear when Breton goes on to talk dismissively about Aragon's poem itself. He writes that 'dans ce poème, le *retour au sujet extérieur* et tout particulièrement au *sujet passionnant* est en désaccord avec toute la leçon historique qui se dégage aujourd'hui des formes poétiques les plus évoluées'.[11] He argues that a century before, 'le sujet ne pouvait déjà plus être qu'indifférent et il a même cessé depuis lors de pouvoir être posé a priori'.[12] He concludes that because of its 'référence continuelle à des accidents particuliers, aux circonstances de la vie publique', 'Front rouge' is a poem of circumstance; in terms of modern poetry it is an aberration: 'sans lendemain parce que poétiquement régressif'.[13] In banning political reference from poetry, Breton illustrates his belief that the liberating effect of poetry depends, in part, on the indifference of the poem's content.[14]

The 'Front rouge' affair highlighted a basic incompatibility between surrealist and Communist ideas about the writer's role in the revolutionary struggle. Breton, and the group of surrealists who continued to follow his lead, were unwilling to sacrifice the independence of their art, and the sanctity of its emphasis on freeing the unconscious; Communists, in turn, were suspicious of the elusive nature of the surrealists' self-determined role in the social revolution. Already in 1926, Pierre Naville had

pointed to a conflict in the aims of surrealism and Communism. In *La Révolution et les intellectuels*, he argued that the surrealists' emphasis on freeing the unconscious suggested that they believed in some form of spiritual liberation that could coexist with bourgeois conditions of life, and that was therefore independent of social revolution (pp. 129-30). The surrealists' assertion in the 'Front rouge' affair that poets could not be judged for their utterances further alienated Communist intellectuals, who saw it as an abdication of their responsibility as writers.

After leaving the Communist Party, Breton continued to stress the social utility of releasing and activating *le penser non-dirigé* through automatic writing. In 'Position politique de l'art d'aujourd'hui' (1935), he argues that through its emphasis on revolutionising ways of thinking, through a type of poetry that was formally innovative (*automatisme*), surrealism managed to overcome the dilemma that was faced by artists who wished their work to participate in the transformation of society, and were at the same time unwilling to have their writings dictated by any political party.[15] In 'Discours au Congrès des Ecrivains', given in 1935 against the backdrop of a rise of fascism in Europe, Breton insists on the urgency of obtaining freedom of thought. He argues that it is only by following its own revolutionary path of formal innovation, and by thus remaining independent of any particular political programme and its rhetoric, that poetry can best serve the cause of man's freedom:

> Ce n'est pas par des déclarations stéréotypées contre le fascisme et la guerre que nous parviendrons à libérer à jamais l'esprit, pas plus que l'homme, des anciennes chaînes qui le menacent. C'est par l'affirmation de notre fidélité inébranlable aux puissances d'émancipation de l'esprit et de l'homme que tour à tour nous avons reconnues et que nous lutterons pour faire reconnaître comme telles.[16]

This plea for the independence of art is repeated forcefully in a tract entitled 'Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendant', published in 1938.[17] Breton uses the examples of the dogma of socialist realism in the Soviet Union, and the repressive measures taken against writers and artists in Nazi Germany, to argue the need for art to remain distinct from politics.

For Breton, the freedom of art from all external considerations, ranging from political reference in poetry to the dictates of a Communist or Fascist party, is consubstantial with the freedom of the individual at which all art is aimed. This, along with the insistence on changing and freeing people by transforming their mode of thought, was the stance that those who remained in the surrealist movement would continue to take in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s. In a lecture given in Yale in 1942, for instance, Breton claims that the war demonstrated the urgency of the need to combat so-called 'rationalist', 'common-sense' thought with 'la raison véritable et sans éclipses (...) vers laquelle, pour commencer, nous ne pouvons tendre qu'en faisant table rase des modes conventionnels de pensée'.[18] J.-F. Chabrun, a member of the Paris-based surrealist group, 'La Main à Plume', refers in 1943 to 'la grande oeuvre de la libération de la pensée que poursuit par essence et par tradition l'effort de la création poétique et, plus spécialement, sous sa forme la plus efficacement agressive, de la Poétique surréaliste'.[19] It was in the name of this liberating poetry, freed from all external political considerations, that Péret would criticise Resistance poetry in 1945. He writes: 'de tout poème *authentique* s'échappe un souffle de liberté entière et agissante, même si cette liberté n'est pas évoquée sous son aspect politique ou social, et, par là, contribue à la libération effective de l'homme' (*Dés* 88-9).

This stance taken by the surrealists was criticised in the 1920s and 1930s by Communist intellectuals, as we have already seen. In 1926, Pierre Naville dismissed as naïve the surrealists' belief in the individual's 'independent' thought processes. In his opinion, the mind was conditioned to such an extent by 'external' social factors that it was impossible to isolate irrational, subjective thought as a free and discrete phenomenon:

> Ils ne comprennent pas la décentralisation de l'individu qui s'opère lorsque celui-ci est soumis à un processus qui le dépasse. A leur besoin de vérité convient seul un certain libre développement des tendances individuelles intimes. Ils y conservent l'illusion de la liberté.
>
> (*La Révolution et les intellectuels*, p. 120)

The surrealists were also criticised by their fellow Communists for their emphasis on verbal research, or linguistic experimentation, which rendered their poetry inaccessible

to most people, despite their claims that it was coextensive with the transformation of society. Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes highlighted this paradox when he wrote: 'on voudrait avoir les pieds sur la terre et on a le verbe dans les nuages!'.[20]

Objections of this kind became more commonly voiced (and not only by Communists) after 1936, and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. In July 1936, with military aid given by Hitler, Franco's troops attacked the Republican government which had been set up in Spain. The ideological parallels between the Spanish Republican cause and the Popular Front movement in France, the geographical proximity of Spain, and the obvious antipathy of Hitler towards France made many writers in France aware that a war against Nazi Germany was imminent. At the same time, it became increasingly obvious that the threat of Nazism and Fascism was not merely a threat to any one or any number of national territories, but a moral and ideological threat in which the whole of humanity was implicated. In 'Ne rêvez plus qu'à l'Espagne', published in November 1936, Aragon calls upon French writers to remember the Spanish cause which was, he claimed, 'celle de l'Humanité entière et non pas seulement de l'Espagne populaire'.[21]

The Spanish Civil War, which augured a catastrophic war against totalitarianism, was a decisive turning-point for many poets, who recognised a need to move away from the 'ivory-tower' attitude of pure poets, or from the hermeticism and deliberate detachment of surrealism, and to involve their poetry fraternally and directly in the social and political events that were affecting 'l'humanité entière'. In 1947, Tzara was to say: 'De toute manière la poésie est plongée dans l'histoire jusqu'au cou, si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi. Elle ne serait pas ce qu'elle est, ce qu'elle n'est pas, si la guerre d'Espagne ne l'avait pas traversée comme un couteau' (*Le Surréalisme et l'après-guerre*, p. 7). A month before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Eluard, conscious of the growing threat from totalitarianism, argued that poets could no longer stand apart from other people: 'Le temps est venu où tous les poètes ont le droit et le devoir de soutenir qu'ils sont profondément enfoncés dans la vie des autres hommes, dans la vie commune' (*OC* I 519). The basis of the new solidarity was an awareness

that the impending war was a social, political fact that no one could avoid or overlook. The surrealists' emphasis on irrational thought and the unconscious mind was no longer considered to be in keeping with the times.[22] Far more serious and urgent a matter was the aggressive spread of Nazism and fascism - totalitarian systems which threatened, in any case, to implant themselves even in the hidden recesses of people's minds.

Calls for a committed poetry which would express, in a direct and accessible manner, the political events that were foremost in people's thoughts, and which were directly affecting some of their lives, were made more and more frequently. After the outbreak of war, and particularly after the occupation of France in June 1940, it seemed obvious and natural to many poets that their poetry should concern itself with the matters at hand, which, in their opinion, concerned each individual member of a community so large as to embrace 'l'humanité entière'. The committed stance of these poets is outlined below.

II A POETRY OF COMMITMENT

1. A FRATERNAL POETRY

> 'Chacun de nous, sans abandonner ses goûts, ses recherches personnelles, reconnaîtra dans tout poète digne de ce nom un frère.'[23]
>
> 'Il n'y avait plus alors de destins individuels, mais une histoire collective qui était la peste et des sentiments partagés par tous.' (Camus, *La Peste*, p. 185)

The first principle of commitment, as outlined by Sartre in 'Présentation des *Temps modernes*', is that the writer is aware of being, like everyone else, part of history, and involved in the contemporary political situation.[24] This section looks at how their awareness of being implicated in a political and historical crisis led certain poets to reject the predominant view of poetry as a pursuit of individualism, and to transform poetry into a fraternal, collective voice, which would express the concerns of the community.

Eluard's plea in 1936 for poets to immerse themselves in 'la vie commune' was often echoed in the years leading up to the war and then throughout the war itself. In 'La parole est à la défense' (1939), Luc Decaunes writes:

> Les murs de la tour d'ivoire derrière lesquels on pouvait se donner le vertige à bon marché, se sont affaissés. La vie tout irriguée de sang, la vie dangereuse que cerne étrangement la Poésie aux mille visages, apporte au poète la certitude grandissante d'être une voix au nom des millions de voix à venir.[25]

The poet's move away from solitude is signalled again by Charles Autrand, in 'Devoir d'exister' (1939):

> Loin de moi la pensée de faire du poète un prophète et un mage: il faut simplement qu'il soit lui-même, c'est-à-dire un être perdu dans la multitude des êtres et qui exprime, parce qu'il en a le pouvoir, ce qu'il ressent et que d'autres ressentent. Il faut qu'il se pénètre de cette idée qu'il n'est pas seul.[26]

During the war, in *Seuls demeurent*, Char writes: 'On tuait de si près que le monde s'est voulu meilleur. (...) Ce n'est plus la volonté elliptique de la scrupuleuse solitude' (*FM* 45). In 1947, Emmanuel would look back on the same sense of solidarity and collective involvement:

> Nous avons traversé tous ensemble une époque historique où la solidarité spirituelle s'inscrivit si profondément dans notre chair, que je ne saurais jamais plus me placer, en regard de ce monde et des hommes, dans l'attitude de celui qui s'en lave les mains.
> (*Aut* 165-6)

There was a widespread reaction against the idea of the poet as a privileged being (or as an outcast) set apart from the rest of humanity. Almost instinctively, certain poets effaced the distinction that had grown between the poet-as-poet, practising an activity detached from contemporary political concerns, and the poet-as-citizen, involved like other people in a particular historical situation. The merging of the 'poète-citoyen' and the 'poète-poémier' was noted with approval by Fouchet in 1939:

> Beaucoup, il est à remarquer, ne peuvent séparer le poète du citoyen, et pour moi je ne saurais le leur reprocher, non seulement parce que les tours d'ivoire perdent sans cesse de leur étanchéité, mais encore parce que je tiens pour nécessaire que la poésie participe du tragique de son temps. Le poète contemporain échappe difficilement à sa qualité civique, à son rôle de cellule sociale agissant ou déagissant selon les modes de son refus ou de son acquiescement.[27]

Henri Hell witnesses this same 'civic' stance of poets during the war, in 'Trahison et fidélité des lettres françaises':

> Le poète réagit devant l'événement avec son âme, son esprit, son tempérament. Devant le choc de l'événement, il prend conscience de sa tâche d'homme. Il est un homme comme les autres: il ne peut demeurer indifférent au drame qui écrase ses frères, il ne peut s'en tenir à l'écart, au nom de sa poésie, de son art; il doit y participer comme les autres.[28]

In 'L'Homme et le poète', Emmanuel writes that 'Etre poète, c'est d'abord être un homme';[29] in 'Sauver l'homme d'abord', he objects to what he calls the 'angélisme' of poets - the poet considered as angel or mystic - and demands that 'le poète soit bien convaincu que sa tâche de poète est liée à sa tâche d'homme et que celle-ci commande celle-là': otherwise, Emmanuel argues, 'il ne serait qu'un histrion méprisable'.[30] Audisio similarly refuses to set himself apart as 'un des vénérables' in a masonic order of poets;[31] in *Poésie involontaire poésie intentionnelle*, Eluard writes: 'Nous n'avons pas une intelligence particulière, nous sommes des êtres moraux et nous nous situons dans la foule' (*OC* I 1134); in his poem 'Camps de concentration', Masson dissociates himself from an elitist class or race of poets: "Je ne suis pas de la race des poètes, je suis homme simplement de votre famille ô frères condamnés' (*LNM* 28). Willing their poetry to be, as Seghers put it, 'à hauteur d'homme',[32] many poets felt unable to abstract their poetry from the political events which were commanding universal attention at the time. Reflecting back on the war, in *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Seghers writes:

> Si individualistes qu'ils soient, les poètes ne sont pas d'éternels rêveurs, des ludions, une troupe d'amuseurs et d'irresponsables. Artisans du langage, témoins et acteurs, il n'est pas de leur nature de devenir sourds et muets quand le danger s'avance. Hommes parmi les hommes, la politique les concerne puisqu'elle les protège ou qu'elle les broie. L'esthétisme évanescent, la tour d'ivoire, la poursuite de l'ineffable sont démodés (...) (Vol. I, pp. 26-7)

This contrasts markedly with the attitude of others, who continued to stress that a poet's activities and preoccupations *as a poet* were necessarily autonomous, despite an unavoidable and even a voluntary involvement, on a human level, in matters social and

political. In *Poésie d'abord*, for instance, Armand Guibert writes that 'Le poète n'est assurément pas esprit pur: il vit de la vie de tous les hommes, organiquement, socialement - mais il existe en lui, aux heures d'affluence, une activité autonome qui l'entraîne hors des limites de son être' (p. 101). During the war, Fombeure commends Bérimont's poetry for having weathered the storm of political commitment, in his preface to Bérimont's *Lyre à feu*. He and Bérimont were both participating actively at the time in the Resistance struggle; nonetheless, Fombeure writes that 'Le poète véritable édifie son oeuvre contre vents et marées. Ou plutôt à l'écart' (p. 27). His ideal of poetry is a purist, 'art-for-art's-sake' ideal, similar to that of Gautier, or Vigny: 'La poésie n'est jamais actuelle ou inactuelle. Elle est autre. Elle porte avec ses réussites sa propre justification. Plus belle d'être inutile' (p. 27). The surrealists were opposed to this idea of poetry as a gratuitous activity; at the same time they, too, conscientiously separated the domains of politics and poetry, as we have already seen. Péret's criticism of Resistance poetry in 1945 was based, in part, on the assumption that in confusing these domains, Resistance poets had betrayed poetry. It is worth noting that in an interview in 1948, Péret claimed that had he been in France during the war, then he would certainly have fought in the Resistance - but without mobilising his poetry into its service: 'Si j'avais été là, j'aurais participé à la Résistance - en combattant. Mais pas en écrivant des poèmes'.[33] His conjecture betokens this same segregation of 'civic' and 'poetic' concerns.[34]

The main concern for those who found it natural that their artistic and civic interests should coincide was to find an adequate voice in which to express collective sufferings and aspirations. As Fouchet points out, 'Il est indispensable au poète citoyen de se faire entendre'.[35]

Since the late nineteenth century, French poetry had mainly concerned itself with the individual *as against* society. Correspondingly, the use of language in poetry had become increasingly obscure, with emphasis placed on verbal individualism. The automatic writing of surrealists, whose aim was to revolutionise the public's ways of thinking, was still often as hermetic and inaccessible as the work of earlier poets, as

Guy Descamps highlights in 'La Guerre et la poésie des années 40':

> Se refusant à la communication à la fois par le caractère inorganique de leur langage et par le caractère insolite de l'objet exprimé, fuyant tout ce qui était social et ne redoutant pas d'être obscurs quitte à ne pas être entendus, ils poursuivirent un mouvement qui s'était manifesté dans la poésie dès la seconde moitié du 19e siècle et dont la caractéristique avait été de se désintéresser de la communauté.[36]

In an article aptly entitled 'De la nuit égoïste à la nuit fraternelle',[37] published in 1938, Fouchet advocates a move away from the obscurity that characterised surrealist poetry. He stresses a need for poetry to be less introverted and more communicable: 'il nous semble que situer la poésie *dans le poète* ne suffit pas, et qu'il y a un autre point à faire. Il nous paraît urgent de la fixer *par rapport à l'homme*.' He commends the surrealists' pursuit of the unknown and the unconscious, but argues that the hermetic nature of their writing means that their message, however important and universal, is largely ignored. He asks: 'Puisqu'il s'agit de donner à l'homme cette notion, de lui faire découvrir cette nuit, ne pourrait-on pas lui en parler, non en le rebutant, mais de manière engageante et compréhensible?'.

During the war, there were more frequent calls for poets to move away from hermeticism and to write in a manner that would be more widely accessible. As Caillois remarks in *Approches de la poésie*: 'un nouvel art poétique conseilla au poète de se détourner décidément de tout hermétisme, qu'il fût de forme ou de fond, et assigna à la poésie la vocation humble et difficile d'aider l'homme à passer avec courage les mauvais moments de l'existence' (p. 62). Emphasis was placed on poetry as a simpler, more direct act of communication, aimed at a wider audience.

In his poem, 'Il n'y a fin de rien', written in 1940, René Laporte redefines poetry as a collective voice which speaks of collective concerns, and renounces the idea of poetry as a solitary pursuit:

> Nul n'a le droit d'absence aux justices du temps
> Personne n'a plus le droit de se croire seul maître de son
> matin et de son soir
> (...)
> La poésie doit être notre dernière cuirasse un langage
> Si vous le voulez la poésie est comme une langue dans la
> bouche commune. La poésie est un complot est un langage
> l'émanation claire d'un peuple qui part avec tous ses bagages

(...)
Maintenant que tous les hommes ont besoin de la même
nourriture[38]

In 'Une divorcée: la poésie',[39] Audisio blames verbal individualism for the unpopularity of poetry, and asks that 'la poésie française cesse d'être séparée des hommes'. He writes: 'Je demande que la poésie *se penche* (...) vers les hommes, le sol, le monde réel; qu'elle parle un langage simple et direct, intelligible à la sensibilité, au coeur'. Aragon demands in 1943 that poets cease to use language as a barrier between them and other people, and use it instead to give people the hope and the assurance of solidarity that they need:

> Ils cherchent l'espérance, et vous la leur donnerez, et cette force d'union qui est dans la parole; vous ne ferez pas défaut à leur soif, vous ne les décevrez pas, vous qui vous lamentiez de votre sort maudit. O poètes, les temps sont venus de déchirer votre robe noire, de dissiper ce brouillard et ces cendres, d'être la voix enfin de votre pays.[40]

Poets responded to this need to communicate with more people by writing poetry which the public could readily identify as such. There was a widespead practice of traditional forms of versification - although this was by no means as general as critics such as Breton and Péret imply. At the same time there was a deliberate simplification of the language used in poetry.

For many poets, it no longer seemed appropriate during the war to use poetry as a laboratory in which to experiment with language. The word-play and verbal acrobatics favoured by Symbolists and surrealists were held to be frivolous, escapist pastimes, out of keeping with the seriousness of the times. For example, Audisio criticises poets 'qui se réfugient, qui démissionnent dans l'hermétisme';[41] Seghers writes that 'le temps de l'amusement, du dilettantisme ou de la poésie du seul langage est révolu';[42] Masson puts forward much the same view in his poem, 'A Joë Nordmann':

> On a fait de l'art un bien gros mot, Joë les vois-tu les amateurs
> la petite boule qu'ils poussent comme au jeu de croquet
> et quand elle passe sous l'arceau choisi c'est chef-d'oeuvre,
> c'est splendeur
> Nous pouvons bien crever nous autres humanité qui n'avons
> pas de marbre au talon!
> Leur jeux passeront comme passent les gloires de l'été (*LNM* 42-3)

Poetry which concerned itself above all with linguistic invention was considered to

have had its day. As Char writes in *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, 'Le poète ne peut pas longtemps demeurer dans la stratosphère du Verbe. Il doit se lover dans de nouvelles larmes et pousser plus avant dans son ordre' (*FM* 91).[43]

In their pursuit of verbal individualism, poets had tended to privilege expression over content and had consequently begun to consider words more as objects than as signs. Emphasis was placed on divesting words of their common referentiality, or of unhinging them from their familiar referents, to give the impression that the meaning of the poem was generated autonomously, by the poem itself. The tendency amongst poets to pay unique attention to the word as object at the expense of the word as sign, was noted by Fouchet in 1938. In 'De la nuit égoïste à la nuit fraternelle',[44] he implies that poets had recently attached too much importance to expression alone:

> Le mot, dans le poème, vaut à la fois comme signe et comme objet. Il a sa vie propre en même temps qu'il signifie, qu'il expose. Le rapport des mots entre eux et leur agencement contribuent à donner au poème sa résonance, sa mélodie interne, à la création de son climat, à la formation de cette aura, de ce rayonnement qui l'entoure. (...) Tout cela va de soi. Mais cette ambivalence du terme a dégénéré en une monovalence, en une prépondérance du mot-objet.

Fouchet puts forward a counteractive view, that 'le mot n'a vraiment de suc que dans la mesure où il est nourri par le sens subjacent qu'il révèle'. Similarly, in 'Les Poissons noirs', written in 1943, Aragon dubs those who simply experiment with words 'les jongleurs'. He argues that their attempt to sever words from reality is futile as well as inappropriately facetious. Like Fouchet, he stresses that words are also signs that refer us to something outside themselves; he implies that in so far as they are referential, words cannot be detached from the circumstances of the outside world, or placed entirely at the disposal of the poet:

> les jongleurs (..) veulent jouer avec les mots, et pour que les mots s'y prêtent, il faut qu'ils soient bons à tous les usages, dans un état de parfaite disponibilité, c'est-à-dire qu'ils ne soient pas alourdis de réalité, qu'ils ne soient pas attachés par leur sens à des circonstances.[45]

During the Occupation of France, when freedom of speech was suppressed, and when language was used, officially, to promote Nazism and the Collaboration, there was a heightened awareness of this fact that words are 'alourdis de réalité', and an

ensuing unwillingness to treat them merely as playthings. So, for example, while Léon-Gabriel Gros argued in October 1940 that poetry belonged to an 'ordre inviolable', and that 'pas plus que l'amour elle ne saurait être affectée par des éléments qui lui sont étrangers',[46] he felt forced to admit in 1943 that 'la Poésie *dans la mesure où son mode d'expression est la langue française* ne saurait entièrement échapper aux infortunes de "la tribu"'.[47] It was partly this increased awareness that words belong to the public domain, and have a direct impact upon it, which set Resistance poets at variance with those who insisted on inventing a private language, of a solipsistic nature.[48]

In the article referred to above, Fouchet suggests that the predominant poetic view of words as objects was largely responsible for the fact that 'la poésie a cessé d'être un rapport entre les vivants'. As a vital part of the attempt to make poetry more accessible and *engageante*, there was a shift in emphasis from treating words uniquely as objects to using them also as signs which reveal the outside world. Rejecting or disregarding the view of poetry which revered expression to the extent that the subject became irrelevant, and even obstructive, Resistance poets used words to refer to the events that were going on around them. An essential feature of the simplification of poetic language, it was undoubtedly this widespread return to *le sujet extérieur*, and more particularly, its reference to matters of contemporary political and social relevance, which gave Resistance poetry its popularity. Poets began to write about subjects which the public could recognise and understand, and which they clearly wished to read about. During the war, as Gaëton Picon puts it, poets strove to establish their work 'sur des terrains qui puissent servir de terrains d'entente, des *lieux communs*' (*Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française*, p. 130).

Resistance poetry was essentially a poetry of circumstance - welcomed as such by the public, and criticised as such by poets and critics who insisted on poetry remaining independent of social and political issues. The following section examines in some detail the important question of poetry of circumstance, as it applies to Resistance poetry.

2. A POETRY OF CIRCUMSTANCE AND CIRCUMSTANTIALITY

'Poetry of circumstance' is a notoriously elastic label, used to describe very different types of poetry, which express different types of circumstances or events. Throughout this section, I will refer to Predrag Matvejevitch's excellent study of poetry of circumstance, *Pour une poétique de l'événement*, in which the reader may find a comprehensive treatment of the subject. Matvejevitch gives an invaluable account of the history and usage of the term, and usefully distinguishes and defines three distinct categories of poetry of circumstance: 'la poésie de circonstance *cérémonielle*', 'la poésie *engagée*', and 'la poésie de circonstance au sens goethéen' (p. 178). The two last categories are particularly relevant to a discussion of Resistance poetry and its adverse critical reception.

In a much-quoted conversation with Eckermann in 1823, Goethe defined all of his poetry as one of circumstance:

> Le monde est si grand, si riche, et la vie offre un spectacle si divers que les sujets de poésie ne feront jamais défaut. Mais il est nécessaire que ce soient toujours des poésies de circonstance, autrement dit il faut que la réalité fournisse l'occasion et la matière. (...) Mes poèmes sont tous des poèmes de circonstance, ils s'inspirent de la réalité, c'est sur elle qu'ils se fondent et reposent. Je n'ai que faire des poèmes qui ne reposent sur rien.
>
> (*Conversations de Goethe avec Eckermann*, p. 27)

In the all-embracing manner in which Goethe uses the term here, it is difficult to envisage any poetry which does not qualify as poetry of circumstance, inspired or informed by some aspect of reality. Eluard, Aragon and Gaucheron all use these remarks of Goethe to argue against a purist view of poetry, and in defence of the poetry of circumstance written during and after the war.[49] It should be noted, however, that Goethe only admitted into poetry a certain type of circumstance, which can be classified as subjective, private and apolitical, and that he held politics, for example, to be an unsuitable subject for poetry:

> gardons-nous (...) de prétendre avec nos jeunes littérateurs que la politique soit la poésie, ou que la politique soit un bon sujet pour les poètes. Le poète anglais Thomson a écrit un fort bon poème sur les *Saisons*, mais un très mauvais sur la *Liberté*, non que la poésie ait manqué au poète, mais parce que le sujet manque de poésie. (op.cit., p. 360)

The circumstances that inspired and which inform Resistance poetry belong to a set of events which Goethe considered to be incompatible with poetry. In 1943, René Tavernier demanded from poets 'une poésie qui tienne au monde où nous respirons';[50]Desnos wrote in 1944 that 'la grande poésie peut être nécessairement actuelle, de circonstances' (*DA* 237); in his 'Manifeste de l'école d'Oradour' (1945), Marcenac writes: 'il est bon que la poésie se charge de toutes les circonstances aggravantes du réel' (p. 13); after the war, René Bertelé continued to argue a case for poetry of circumstance:

> nous ne concevons guère que la poésie soit séparée des "choses du monde", nous voulons qu'elle s'en nourrisse et s'en accroisse et en porte témoignage (...). Nous la voulons efficace, "engagée" (...) et surtout *engageante*, et née du choc des circonstances.[51]

In these demands for and apologies of poetry of circumstance, the type of circumstance envisaged is not of a uniquely intimate or personal order, but also of a public, social and political order. The poetry written during the Resistance takes its inspiration in general from the German Occupation of France, and from the struggle against Nazism. Poems were written about specific incidents that occurred throughout that struggle, such as the executions of a number of hostages at Châteaubriant and of Gabriel Péri, the massacre of several hundred *maquisards* in the Vercors, or the destruction of the village of Oradour.[52] There was a common rejection of poetry which dealt with subjects disconnected from the contemporary political crisis. Take, for example, this excerpt from an anonymous poem, published in the clandestine journal, *La Corse délivrée*:

> Non, tu ne peux chanter l'air pur et les nuages.
> Non, tu ne peux chanter les brises du printemps.
> Non, tu ne peux chanter les charmes de l'antan.
> Non, tu ne peux chanter les fleurs et les bocages.
> (...)
> Chante tous ceux qui paient pour demeurer des hommes
> Et renoncent à tout pour pouvoir l'emporter,
> A l'amour, à la vie, au bonheur d'être, en somme,
> Qui renoncent à tout, sauf à la Liberté. (*Europe* 208)

In *Le Musée Grévin*, Aragon asks: 'Comment voudriez-vous que je parle des fleurs / Et qu'il n'y ait des cris dans tout ce que j'écris?' (p. 25). In 'Pour un chant national',

written in response to the publication of Alain Borne's *Neige et 20 poèmes*, Aragon criticises Borne for writing poems about the seasons, nature and love. He points to a disparity between Borne's subject-matter and the actual circumstances of the time:

> Alain vous que tient en haleine
> Neige qu'on voit en plein mois d'août
> Neige qui naît je ne sais d'où (*YE* 75)[53]

Resistance poetry falls into that category of poetry of circumstance which Matvejevitch distinguishes from the one favoured by Goethe, and qualifies as 'la poésie de circonstance appelée *engagée*' (p. 175). This term is used by Matvejevitch to denote poetry which enters into 'les débats de la cité ou du siècle' (p. 66) - which is 'rattachée aux événements socio-politiques ou historiques' (p. 175). When Resistance poetry was criticised for being poetry of circumstance, it was because the types of circumstances which it evoked were held to be unsuitable for poetry, as distinct from private, 'apolitical' circumstances (such as a dream, a love affair, the death of a friend, the contemplation of a landscape...), which are freely recognised as suitable material for poetry. It will be useful here to examine in some more detail the reasons why certain critics of Resistance poetry assumed that the public, political events which informed it should repel any transformation into poetry. This will set in clearer relief the nature of the committed poetry of circumstance which was advocated and practised during the Resistance.

In *Pour une poétique de l'événement*, Matvejevitch raises an important point which is well worth developing here. He writes that for the purpose of his own study of poetry of circumstance it was necessary to establish a typology of events - to distinguish 'quelques types d'événements que l'on présente - souvent à tort - sous forme d'antithèse: public et privé, objectif et subjectif, collectif et individuel, historique et quotidien, durable et fugitif, prévisible et aléatoire, répétitif et unique' (p. 177). I would argue here that while those who criticised Resistance poetry considered these 'types' of events to be antithetical, and implied that there was a *choice* to be made between them, it was the view of the committed poets of the Resistance (and one of the essential points which is made in Resistance poetry), that there is no necessary or even

possible contradiction between matters public and private, collective and individual, singular and universal, or transient and eternal. These alleged oppositions are resolved in Resistance poetry, which makes manifest a dialectical relation between them.

There are two main reasons why certain critics of Resistance poetry considered that social and political circumstances could not be rendered into poetry. First, the poet is assumed to be less personally involved in public circumstances than in private ones. That is, the poet's degree of implication in an event is considered to diminish when that event is collective and political, and this diminishment, in turn, is considered to be detrimental to poetry.[54] Second, the assumed criterion for poetry is that it should transform a particular, contemporary incident into something of universal and lasting significance. Resistance poetry, which took as its subject-matter contemporary political and social events was, according to certain critics, destined to be as limited in significance and as ephemeral as the events themselves, and consequently to have only a documentary value. This committed poetry of circumstance was regarded, as Lescure points out, rather like 'une gazette en vers, limitée au commentaire de l'événement et périssable ainsi que toute rhétorique des "actualités"'.[55] These two general reasons for considering the subject-matter of Resistance poetry impossible to poeticise imply some basic sets of oppositions: between individual or private circumstances, and collective or public circumstances, and between transient, contemporary concerns, and concerns that are atemporal and eternal.

Before going on to illustrate that these were considered by Resistance poets not to be mutually exclusive, but interdependent, I would call attention briefly to another opposition which is assumed in particular by surrealists, and by critics who favoured the surrealist view of poetry: namely, an opposition between expression and content. The confusion of a return to *le sujet extérieur* with a conformism in poetic language (made by both Breton and Péret in their appraisals of Resistance poetry), the insistence on the indifference of subject-matter in a poem, and the exclusive emphasis that is laid on a revolutionary use of language, imply that for these poets and critics, poetry lies in expression alone, and not in content or in the relation between the two. The rejection

by Resistance poets of *la poésie du seul langage* has already been noted. This is not, however, to say that Resistance poetry foregrounds content at the expense of expression. A crucial feature of the poetry of circumstance written during the Resistance is an *interdependence* of content and expression, which resolves any assumed opposition between them. This important point, which can only be argued properly through analyses of individual poems of circumstance, is illustrated and developed in Chapter IV and in the commentary which concludes this thesis.

The tendency to restrict the subject-matter of poetry to private circumstances, and to imply that public circumstances are less privileged because they are experienced less intensely by the poet, assumes that the private and public domains are separable. This distinction is maintained, moreover, in the surrealists' emphasis on the utterances of an individual's unconscious, in Guibert's claim in 1937 that 'le monde existe au-dedans de nous, la beauté existe intérieurement' (*Poésie d'abord* p. 102), or in Fombeure's declaration in 1943 that 'chaque poète porte en lui son univers qu'il n'est nullement tenu de confronter ou de conformer au monde dit "réel" dans lequel il vit. La poésie demeure peut-être la seule fête intime qu'on puisse se donner à soi-même'.[56] Committed poets, on the other hand, were convinced that the private and public, individual and collective domains could no longer be held separate. What convinced them of this was what they recognised as the 'total' nature of the war against Nazism - the public event which directly or indirectly informs Resistance poetry.[57]

It is essential to emphasise that as well as a political threat, totalitarian Nazism was perceived by many poets and writers as a moral threat, which endangered what Seghers calls 'la totalité de l'homme'[58] - by which he refers both to all humankind and to the affective and intellectual experience of each individual. In *Histoire des Editions de Minuit*, Debû-Bridel writes that 'cette guerre fut une guerre d'idées, une guerre morale (p.)'; Cassou recalls the war in *La Mémoire courte* as a time when each individual 's'est trouvé engagé dans toute une richesse d'épreuves à quoi tous les hommes, toutes les valeurs humaines les plus précieuses étaient intéressés' (p. 52). The aim of Nazism, it should be remembered, was not only to conquer territory, but to shape

people's behaviour, expression and thought.

For Resistance poets, it no longer seemed possible to believe (as surrealists seemed to) that there was some inalienable, essential part of man which is constrained or repressed by society, but which remains intact within the individual's unconscious. As G.-E. Clancier pointed out in 1945,

> il était évident (...) que si le Mal - soit l'Allemagne - triomphait, c'en était fait justement de la part inaliénable de nos rêves, de nos actes, de notre silence, ce domaine de la poésie. C'en était fait de l'homme sur lequel avec tant de ferveur se penchaient nos poètes.[59]

The emphasis on the individual alone seemed as incomplete to many poets in the light of the war as it had done to Naville in 1926. Tzara notes that 'Après l'Espagne et Munich, il devenait clair pour moi que l'homme seul, face à la poésie était bien peu de chose devant le fait brutal de l'Histoire';[60] Georges Adam remarks that 'la liberté intérieure, dans une conscience un peu exigeante sent bien vite sa limite en un temps de contrainte';[61] in 'L'Homme et le poète', written in 1942, Emmanuel argues:

> Hic et nunc, voilà la devise de l'homme vivant. Elle est difficile à respecter, mais on ne triche pas avec la vie. Inutile d'essayer de s'en tirer en se fabriquant une petite unité intérieure de tout repos, compte non tenu de l'histoire: autant vaudrait se coucher dans son propre cercueil. (p. 85)

It seems that as well as having a different idea of poetry from that of their critics, the committed poets of the 1930s and 1940s had formulated a different conception of man. As a result of the extreme political crisis of these years, the 'essential' nature of man was no longer considered to lie in individuality alone, as something free and autonomous, but in an individuality tempered and formed by public, political circumstances. An awareness of all that was at stake in this particular war caused committed poets to recognise man as a totality, comprising private and internal dimensions, indivisible from public, political and historical dimensions. This concept of man as a totality was inevitably reflected in the committed poetry of the Resistance. In 'Pierre Seghers et le romancero des années noires', Gaucheron writes:

> C'était cela, la poésie de la Résistance, l'obligation impérieuse de substituer à la poésie d'exploration de la vie intérieure et de la conscience privée, une poésie qui affronte les problèmes relatifs

> à la personnalité totale des hommes, privée mais aussi publique, civique et politique! (*Europe* 276)

The main way in which Resistance poets make manifest an idea of 'la personnalité totale des hommes' as a dialectic of public and private, individual and collective concerns, is by expressing, in their own very individual ways, the collective political events in which they felt personally implicated. Cassou points out after the war that

> tout ce qui fut en jeu alors et qui est chose commune et de partage, d'idées, principes, causes, liberté, justice, patrie, peuple, histoire, démocratie, révolution, amour de l'homme, ne peut être avant tout conçu, senti que du point de vue d'une épreuve personnelle, sous une couleur et selon une mélodie personnelles. (*La Mémoire courte*, pp. 52-3)

One of the collective issues at stake during the Occupation was, as Cassou points out, the French *patrie*. The following chapter, which examines the concept of *patrie* as it is voiced by Resistance poets, demonstrates a conspicuous merging in the poetry of personal and public preoccupations. Chapter III then examines in detail the concept of man that is proposed and defended in Resistance poetry, and develops this idea of man as a totality.

The second major objection to committed poetry of circumstance is that its subject-matter dates it and gives it an only limited, domestic, significance, while poetry proper is universally significant, and eternally relevant. In order better to achieve that element of universality and 'eternity', poets were counselled by critics before and during the war to steer clear of 'temporal' concerns. In 1937, for instance, Armand Guibert refers to 'le don poétique dont le champ d'exploration ne commence qu'*au delà des limites du temporel*' (*Poésie d'abord*, p. 34), and in 'Poésie française', written in 1941, Kléber Haedens writes:

> la poésie résiste à toutes les inventions, à tous les bouleversements. Le temps n'est pas pour elle un élément corrupteur et la transformation, l'éclatement du monde ne peuvent l'atteindre. Elle se tient, comme un soleil fixe et radieux, au delà des tempêtes.[62]

It will be demonstrated in later chapters that a deliberate attempt was made by Resistance poets to 'eternalise' the contemporary events that they were writing about, and to emphasise what they considered in any case to be their universal and lasting

significance. Chapter IV contains a description of the attempt made by certain poets to build myths from two particular events of the Resistance: the execution of twenty-seven hostages at Châteaubriant, and that of Gabriel Péri. My concluding commentary on Tardieu's poem 'Oradour' illustrates a similar process, whereby Tardieu presents the destruction of Oradour-sur-Glane in 1944 as a general and lasting symbol. It is also important to stress that many Resistance poets viewed the war against Nazism as a matter in itself of far-reaching importance, with an inbuilt metaphysical dimension which they sought to express in their poetry. In 'Poésie et catastrophe', originally published in 1942 as a preface to Emmanuel's *La Colombe*, Jouve refers to 'une Poésie qui, à l'égard de l'événement du temps, le touche d'une main très profonde, et puisse être lue, tantôt comme une traduction directe des faits bouleversants, tantôt comme la méditation beaucoup plus éloignée de ce qui est à la racine' (*Commentaires*, p. 70).[63] Jouve, Emmanuel and a number of other Resistance poets often expressed the war as a symbol of more permanent philosophical and metaphysical concerns. The Resistance to Nazism is presented (as we shall see illustrated in Chapter III) as a resistance to the absurdity of the human condition, and as the manifestation of a permanent internal struggle between conflicting impulses, such as good and evil, or Eros and Thanatos. In practice, then, it seems that Resistance poetry fulfils the requirements of critics such as Clancier, who argued in 1942 that poets should take the war as their subject-matter only on condition that 'ce soit pour en tirer la part d'éternité',[64] or Henri Hell, who wrote in the same year that 'même si l'événement se trouve à la source de l'inspiration poétique, la poésie ne jaillit que si le poète sait être suffisamment détaché de l'événement pour en dégager son essence éternelle'.[65]

In conclusion to this section, it is important to point out that one of the most powerful lasting and universal messages contained in Resistance poetry is that eternal and universal concerns do not exist outside, but as a function of, particular historical circumstances. The idea that art should involve itself only with eternal matters prompts Georges Adam to ask, in 1944: 'qu'est-ce qu'une question de tous les temps,

qui n'est pas aussi, qui n'est pas d'abord du nôtre?'[66] Now foremost amongst these eternal questions (or of those with which artists and writers are eternally preoccupied), is that of the human condition - of how to define it, and of whether or not there is such a thing as an essential, eternal human nature. In the minds of Resistance poets, the political events of the late 1930s and then the war itself put paid to any belief in an eternal, essential man, unaffected by political, historical circumstances. The concept of man that is put forward in Resistance poetry is, as we shall see in Chapter III, strongly anti-eternal and anti-essentialist. Emphasis is placed instead on man as a circumstantial being, unable to escape political and historical contingency. In 1942, Emmanuel writes: 'Hic et Nunc, voilà la devise de l'homme vivant';[67] the following year, Gaston Baissette comments that 'l'homme d'aujourd'hui se trouve au centre d'une immense épopée. Non pas l'épopée de l'homme éternel, mais celle de l'homme prise à un moment donné de son histoire';[68] after the Liberation, Marcenac argues that the circumstances of the war discredited any consoling notion of 'l'homme éternel' (*CF* 13) and had taught instead 'une méthode historique' (*CF* 19). Correspondingly, Marcenac qualifies poetry as 'une fille du temps' and not as 'une recherche de l'éternel' (*CF* 13).

To the committed poets of the Resistance, it seemed that those who maintained that poetry should concern itself with eternal matters were upholding the misleading and outmoded concept of an eternal man - qualified succinctly by Emmanuel in 'D'une poésie armée' as 'l'homme dégagé de la contingence historique, exprimé dans son essence, et donnant aux oeuvres de l'esprit leur unité à travers le temps'.[69] This is implied throughout Marcenac's 'Manifeste de l'Ecole d'Oradour' (*CF* 13-20), for example, and in Masson's 'Lettre à un poète', published in 1942:

> La poésie sera intemporelle ou ne sera pas, déclarez-vous, et vous restez fidèle à votre assertion ... Ah! pourtant, seriez-vous si bas descendu que vous ne voyez même plus l'homme! Et puisque vous êtes de France, l'homme français aujourd'hui, son immense blessure silencieuse soulevant comme un levain de l'horizon![70]

Throughout this thesis it is argued that Resistance poetry achieves universality

and permanence precisely because it is deliberately and conspicuously dated: this poetry of circumstance is, as Aragon writes in *Chroniques du bel canto*, 'éternelle d'être datée' (p. 25). The 'eternal' message of Resistance poetry is that of man's historical, circumstantial nature, and this message comes across only because the poetry takes as its subject-matter contemporary political events that are, by nature, ephemeral. In other words, by virtue of being poetry of circumstance, Resistance poetry is also, lastingly, a poetry of circumstantiality. This appears to be what Tzara intimates after the war, when he argued that Resistance poetry could better be termed 'poésie de *la* circonstance':

> Cette nouvelle poésie de circonstance, que j'appellerai plus volontiers poésie de *la* circonstance (...), fournit la démonstration que les valeurs universelles de l'art peuvent prendre leur source dans les faits temporels.[71]

This vital question of Resistance poetry as one which is 'éternelle d'être datée', is raised again and developed in Chapters III and IV.

3. AN OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT

> Je veux bien être engagé, et j'y consens d'autant plus volontiers qu'il ne peut en être autrement, mais je formule une réserve, je demande que cet engagement, en échange duquel aucune garantie ne m'est donnée, aucune promesse ne m'est faite, n'ait pas un caractère absolu. Inéluctable et irrévocable, soit, mais non total. (André Billy)[72]

It was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter that a number of Resistance poets objected to being called 'poètes engagés', or to having their work classified as 'poésie engagée'. Take, for example, these remarks by three poets: 'Je n'aime pas le mot "engagement", parce qu'il peut laisser croire qu'on s'est enrôlé, et que le poète brandit des mots d'ordre comme des bannières' (Seghers);[73] 'Je ne parle pas de poésie engagée - encagée! J'ai horreur de ce mot-là. Engagée où? Dans les troupes coloniales?' (Guillevic);[74] 'Je n'aime pas le mot d'engagement, il sert encore à soumettre la poésie à des dogmes moraux, religieux, politiques ou sociaux' (Cassou).[75] The French word 'engagement' has strong connotations of servility , which derive from its etymology ('être à gages de'). It suggests the fact of being in

someone's employ, with fixed obligations to fulfil. One thinks (as Guillevic does) of a soldier enlisting in the army; applied to poetry, the word also conjures up memories of patronage - for, as Matvejevitch points out in *Pour une poétique de l'événement*,

> Pour le poète de l'Antiquité ou du Moyen Age être engagé équivalait, dans la grande majorité des cas, à être *à gages*, être soutenu par ses protecteurs et mécènes en vue de défendre ou glorifier dans ses vers - généralement *de circonstance* - la cause qui convenait à leurs intérêts. (pp. 203-4)

It is this idea of writing to command, in order to glorify a predetermined cause, which is sometimes implied by the use of the word 'engagement', and from which Resistance poets wished to distance themselves and their poetry. It was perhaps particularly important to do so, in their minds, because of the example of Collaborationist writers, who were viewed by Resistance poets as 'valets' responding to the commands of the Occupiers, glorifying their cause and being paid for their services.[76] So Gaucheron writes in *La Poésie, la Résistance*: 'On voit bien qu'il peut exister une "littérature" à gages, c'était le cas d'un certain nombre de journalistes collaborateurs, qui recevaient des enveloppes' (p. 245).

In order to put into perspective the specific nature of commitment in Resistance poetry, it will be useful here to look briefly at the calls that were made in the colloborationist press for writers to move away from hermeticism and individualism, and to involve themselves in political and social matters. The similarities between these and the Resisters' calls for 'commitment' are sometimes striking. The differences are crucial.

In 'Notre littérature et nous', for example, Marius Richard objects to 'le dogme du sujet-qui-ne-compte-pas', and writes that 'Nous avons à faire une littérature d'hommes. L'homme social, l'homme spirituel d'entre deux âges est là: c'est l'objet qui nous est proposé';[77] in 'Les Chevaliers de la littérature pure', Joseph Rouault comments: 'il n'y a rien de plus stupide que ce concept de "littérature pure": cela ne veut rien dire. Il ne saurait y avoir de grande littérature, de belles et durables oeuvres littéraires, hors du temps et de l'espace où elles se produisent';[78] in 'Pour une poésie

impure', Brasillach writes:

> Les années que nous vivons sont chargées d'un *fantastique social* et politique (..) inouï dans l'histoire du monde. Il serait beau que, grâce à la jeunesse, on vit succéder à l'âge de la poésie pure l'âge de la *poésie impure*. C'est-à-dire chargée de toutes les scories de l'existence humaine et des explosifs de notre temps.[79]

These Collaborators had a definite object in mind for 'littérature engagée'. Writers were to dedicate their work to the cause of Pétain's National Revolution and to the Collaboration. Brasillach's article, 'Pour une poésie impure', for example, was inspired by the publication in Germany of anonymous collections of poems by Nazi militants and members of the Hitler Youth organization: he calls for something similar in France. In 'Droits et devoirs du talent', Camille Mauclair writes:

> Tout écrit doit rester libre, mais avec cette seule clause: l'écrivain ne devra plus oublier qu'il a charge d'âmes, et qu'il est un ouvrier utile à l'assainissement, au relèvement, à l'unité morale d'une patrie désormais liée au destin européen. Si telle doit être une pensée "dirigée", saluons-la, et souhaitons qu'elle relègue dans la honte l'individualisme immoraliste comptant au nombre des mensonges qui nous ont fait tant de mal.[80]

Responding to a survey carried out by Adolphe de Falgairolle - 'La Littérature a-t-elle une part de responsabilité dans notre désastre'[81] - Marcel Prévost writes that 'une éducation sportive, non seulement des muscles, mais des caractères et des volontés' is the 'vaste et bel objet de pensée et d'action pour la littérature française de demain'. René Lasne calls specifically for poetry to aid and propagate Franco-German collaboration, arguing that

> une collaboration infiniment féconde entre les deux pays ne sera possible que le jour où chacun y apportera, en même temps que toute son attention à la tâche immédiate et précise, ses libres horizons et son chant intérieur, et où l'autre entendra ce chant et découvrira cet horizon.[82]

In 'Un poète civique', written by 'Orion' in praise of Albert Pestour, who was one of the few laureates of the National Revolution, we read:

> Un peu de réflexion fait déplorer que nos poètes (...) méconnaissent presque tous cette fonction du poète: célébrer l'héroïsme, glorifier la patrie, verser dans l'âme du citoyen, du soldat, de l'adolescent, un généreux levain de dévouement au pays.[83]

There are two important points of distinction to be made between the commitment advocated by Collaborators and that practised in Resistance poetry. First, Resistance poetry was written *in opposition* to what was then the political status quo, while the demands that we have seen illustrated above are for literature to *support* the politics of Collaboration. The second difference (which is closely related to the first) is that Collaborators had in mind as the object of literary commitment a fixed political doctrine - that of the National Revolution, or of National Socialism. The commitment of Resistance poets had no such fixed objective; it promoted no predetermined cause. These two points need to be developed.

As we saw in the Introduction, Resistance poetry has been criticised, most often by surrealists, for its conservatism - for abandoning the function of poetry which is, according to Péret, to 'prononcer les paroles toujours sacrilèges et les blasphèmes permanents' (*Dés* 74). The suggestion is that Resistance poets were writing in support of a given order. Jehan Mayoux states this directly in 'Benjamin Péret, la fourchette coupante', where he differentiates hetween Péret's poems of circumstance (written about 'des sujets d'actualité'), and those of Resistance poets:

> Les poèmes d'actualité de Péret attaquent et nient un présent cruel ou sordide, mais au contraire de ceux de la Résistance, ils ne défendent aucune institution, aucun système, aucune idéologie *régnante* du présent ou du passé, perpétuellement dressés contre ce qui est, tendus vers ce qui sera, ils ne s'inclinent jamais.[84]

It seems that their dedication to the doctrine of surrealism blinded surrealists to the fact that Resistance poetry is - like the poetry they advocate - essentially one of opposition. The fundamental element of opposition in Resistance poetry , emphasised throughout *La Poésie, la Résistance* by Gaucheron, is reiterated by Marcenac, who qualifies poetry as 'l'expression irréfutable d'une révolte contre ce qui est' (*Pablo Neruda*, p. 62). In an interview with Charles Haroche in 1979, Marcenac says:

> Jacques Gaucheron a montré qu'il n'y a pas une poésie de la Résistance, mais que Poésie et Résistance (..) c'est la même chose. Il y a bien des raisons à cela. D'abord *dire non*. Tu te souviens de ce que dit Baudelaire à propos de la poésie: "Elle contredit sans cesse le fait, à peine de ne plus être." La

> Résistance pour les poètes ne fut pas autre chose qu'une expérience cruciale et une mise en oeuvre privilégiée de cet axiome. (p. 45)

The chapters that follow illustrate this aspect of opposition which, as we shall see, is fundamental to Resistance poetry.

It is of equal importance to stress that Resistance poets were not merely opposing one political order with another. The essential difference between the commitment advocated by Collaborators and that practised by Resistance poets cannot be reduced to a difference between political creeds: importantly, rather, it lies in the fact that there are *no* fixed creeds or predetermined causes defended or promoted in the poetry.

Poets who held and practised a number of different political and religious convictions found themselves united in the Resistance struggle. As Cayrol points out shortly after the war: 'Il n'y avait plus ni catholiques, ni communistes, mais des êtres qui étaient revenus à la source, qui parlaient la même langue dans cette Babel'. [85] This mirrors the Resistance movement in general, celebrated by Aragon in 'La rose et le réséda' as a melting-pot of different factions:

> Celui qui croyait au ciel
> Celui qui n'y croyait pas
> Quand les blés sont sous la grêle
> Fou qui fait le délicat
> Fou qui songe à ses querelles
> Au coeur du commun combat (*DF* 19)

The common object of the Resistance struggle, as the poets envisaged it, and the object of their own commitment, was a certain concept of man, which, in their minds, was threatened by totalitarianism. In 'Vers une poésie sociale' (1941), Seghers writes:

> Nous ne croyons pas aux partis, aux classes, aux intellectuels, aux prolétaires. Nous croyons en l'homme. (...) Si les poètes ont un devoir social à accomplir, il est manifeste: Le monstre hante le labyrinthe; il faut le vaincre; il faut sauver l'homme en danger. (p. 4)

Rejecting the term 'art engagé' after the war, on the grounds that it suggests the type of art which reiterates some ready-made doctrine, Tzara writes: 'Il n'y a pas d'engagement qu'envers l'ensemble de la vie, dans la mesure où le poète reconnaît dans l'homme le centre de ses préoccupations'.[86]

It could be argued, of course, that Collaborationist writers also envisaged man as the overall object of their commitment, and that humanism, too, can be a fixed, essentialist ideal. It is demonstrated at length in Chapter III, however, that the concept of man that is defended and promoted in Resistance poetry, and which constitutes its sole object, is fluid, ever-changing and constantly undefined: a conscious antidote to essentialism.

The poets' commitment to man in general is mediated through their defence of man in particular - of 'l'homme français aujourd'hui', and through their defence of France itself, as the protector of the concept of man that they sought to defend. Let us now look at the poets' expression of the French *patrie*, bearing in mind that the patriotic content of Resistance poetry was taken by many critics as proof of its 'anti-poetic' conservatism.

NOTES

1. See I. Higgins, 'Shrimp, Plane and France: Ponge's Resistance Poetry', p. 322.
2. See below, p. 49.
3. For a full description of the various refinements to Sartre's theory of commitment, I would refer the reader to C. Howells's article 'Sartre and the commitment of pure art', and to her excellent study, *Sartre's Theory of Literature*.
4. Aragon stated in 1971 that he had never been 'engagé'. He gives as his reason for this the fact that the word was a common label for Sartre's philosophical system, which Aragon claims neither to understand nor (by implication) to care about. (Towarnicki and Kedros , 'Entretien avec Aragon', p. 140.)
5. T. Tzara, *Le Surréalisme et l'après-guerre*, p. 15.
6. For a full account of the surrealists' involvement in politics, I would refer the reader to Nadeau's *Histoire du surréalisme*, and to Robert Short's article, 'The Politics of Surrealism, 1920-36'.
7. In J. Pierre (ed.), *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives 1922-1939*, Vol.1, pp. 459-65.
8. Ibid., pp. 204-5.
9. Ibid., pp. 209-22.
10. Ibid., p. 213.
11. Ibid., p. 217.

12. Ibid., pp. 217-8.

13. Ibid., pp. 218.

14. It should be noted that the later practice of surrealism was not entirely consistent with what Breton writes here. In 1933, for example, Breton, Péret, Eluard and Char published poems about Violette Nozières (reproduced in J. Pierre's *Tracts* ..., pp. 246-62). Péret's *Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là* (1936) is a collection of satirical poems on French bourgeois society.

15. *Manifestes du surréalisme*, p. 270.

16. Ibid., p. 285.

17. J. Pierre, *Tracts* ..., pp. 335-9.

18. *La Situation du surréalisme entre les deux guerres*, p. 5.

19. 'La Situation poétique', p. 5.

20. Quoted in J.-M. Place's introduction to *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution*, p. x.

21. *Europe*, 168 (15 novembre 1936), p. 359.

22. It was no doubt because of this that Eluard broke discreetly with the surrealist movement in 1938.

23. André Blanchard, 'Poètes casqués, nos camarades', *Poètes casqués*, 4 (juillet 1940), p. 19.

24. 'Pour nous l'écrivain n'est ni Vestale, ni Ariel: il est "dans le coup" quoi qu'il fasse, marqué, compromis jusque dans sa plus lointaine retraite' (*Situations* II, p. 12).

25. *Fontaine*, 5 (août-septembre 1939), p. 91.

26. Ibid., p. 87.

27. 'Le Poète a toujours des devoirs et ses devoirs sont ses droits', p. 93.

28. *Fontaine*, 25 (novembre-décembre 1942), p. 527.

29. *Fontaine*, 19-20 (mars-avril 1942), p. 85.

30. *Le Mot d'ordre*, 15 juillet 1942, p. 2.

31. 'Les poètes sont-ils les grands prêtres d'une caste d'initiés?', *Le Figaro*, 15 février 1941, p. 3.

32. 'Poésie à hauteur d'homme', *Le Figaro*, 12-13 septembre 1942, p. 3.

33. D. Arban, 'Le Tour d'horizon du poète surréaliste "absent de Paris"', *Le Figaro littéraire*, 24 avril 1948, p. 3.

34. For Resistance poets, such a separation of activities and interests was personally inconceivable. This sometimes led them to take the uncommitted stance of 'pure' poets as a token of their indifference to the sufferings of others. For example, Emmanuel opens his article, 'Sauver l'homme d'abord', with a condemnation of

those poets who ignore the social disruption around them: 'Ceux qui préfèrent ne pas le voir, et retirent leur épingle du jeu en disant, par exemple: "La poésie nous reste" se font sans s'en douter, les complices du mal universel' (p. 2). While it is understandable that attitudes should be polarised thus during the war, it is important now to point out that those poets whose work did not consciously or conspicuously reflect contemporary social and political issues were by no means indifferent to them - as is demonstrated clearly by the case of Fombeure and Bérimont. They merely tended towards a different view and a different practice of poetry to that of committed poets.

35. 'Le poète a toujours des devoirs et ses devoirs sont ses droits', p. 94.

36. *Revue des langues vivantes*, 14e année, 1948, p. 81.

37. *Mithra*, 1 (novembre 1938), unnumbered pages.

38. In Seghers, *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Vol. 2, p.256.

39. *Le Figaro*, 1 février 1941, p. 3.

40. 'L'Année du chèvrefeuille' (published under the pseudonym of Georges Meyzargues), *Poésie 43*, 12 (janvier-février 1943), pp. 12-13.

41. 'Qui sauvera l'homme sauvera la Poésie', *Poésie 42*, 3 (mai-juin 1942), p. 71.

42. 'Vers une poésie sociale', Le Figaro, 26 juillet 1941, p. 4.

43. See also René Tavernier, 'La Vie poétique', *Confluences*, 16 (janvier 1943), p. 108; Claude Roy, 'Les Cloches du sommeil', *Poésie 43*, 16 (octobre-novembre 1943), p. 51; Emmanuel, *Autobiographies*, p. 168.

44. See note 36, above.

45. *Le Musée Grévin* (1946), pp. 30-31.

46. 'La Poésie demeure', *Cahiers du sud*, 225 (octobre 1940), p. 450.

47. 'Un poète engagé: Loys Masson', *Cahiers du sud*, 261 (novembre 1943), p. 894. (My italics.)

48. The points raised here are developed in detail in Chapter IV.

49. In 'La Poésie de circonstance' (*OC* II, p. 931), C. Chonez, 'Un entretien avec Aragon' (p. 47), and *La Poésie, la Résistance* (p. 239), respectively.

50. 'La Vie poétique', *Confluences*, 16 (janvier 1943), p. 108.

51. 'Ce poème qui est poème et rien de plus', *Confluences*, 11 (avril 1946), p. 233.

52. Poems commemorating these particular events are examined in detail in the course of Chapters III and IV. A commentary on Tardieu's poem 'Oradour' concludes this thesis.

53. In the same poem, Aragon writes that 'Les raisons d'aimer et de vivre / varient comme font les saisons' (*YE* 76). It is worth noting here that many Resistance poems, including those of Aragon, are also love poems, or poems written in celebration of nature and the four seasons - yet these traditional subjects of poetry were conspicuously coloured in the work or Resistance poets by the political circumstances of the time. This will be illustrated in Chapter II.

54. Such a belief underlies Breton's comment to A. Parinaud, which follows his dismissal of the poetry of circumstance written during the Resistance:

> Je sais bien que Goethe pouvait dire, à la fin de sa vie, que toutes ses poésies étaient des "poésies de circonstance" mais (..) ceci ne peut être compris qu'en liaison avec sa conviction que l'oeuvre d'art doit être "vraie" et non "réelle".
>
> (*Entretiens*, p. 290)

55. 'André Frénaud ou la poésie à hauteur d'homme', p. 59.

56. Preface to Bérimont's *Lyre à feu*, p. 13.

57. It does seem necessary to make a distinction between the public circumstances which constitute the subject-matter of Resistance poetry, and those that inform another category of poetry of circumstance, which can be qualified as 'occasional verse'. Occasional verse is usually written in celebration of some public event of domestic import, and generally it is written to order. The work of the English poets laureate, or of poets in France who worked under the old system of patronage, come into this category of poetry of circumstance. In *Misères de la poésie*, Audisio points out that there is a world of difference between an event such as the war, and the subject matter of a typical piece of occasional verse, which he exemplifies by 'l'abbé Delille dédiant une épître en vers sur l'hygiène à M. Laurent "à l'occasion d'un bras artificiel qu'il avait fait pour un soldat invalide"' (pp. 70-71).

58. 'Vers une poésie sociale', p. 2.

59. 'La Poésie et l'événement', *Fontaine*, 41 (avril 1945), p. 115.

60. 'Entretiens avec Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes', *Oeuvres complètes* V, p. 407.

61. *Almanach des Lettres françaises*, p. 26.

62. *Confluences*, 3 (septembre 1941), p. 316.

63. See also Jouve's comment in *En miroir*: 'Il n'y eut jamais (...) l'opposition d'une poésie de l'événement à une poésie plus pure; bien au contraire, volonté poétique constante d'embrasser, par un système donné, ce que l'événement tragique en son entier présentait de concordant avec la condition la plus approfondie de l'homme' (p. 88).

64. 'Contre-poison', *Le Figaro*, 22 août 1942, p. 3.

65. 'Quatre poètes français d'aujourd'hui', *Fontaine*, 26 (décembre 1942), p. 102.

It is, of course, much easier now than it was forty years ago to notice the universal dimension of Resistance poetry. The added time-perspective has, as was argued in the Introduction, a vital role to play in the interpretation of this poetry, precisely because it deals with dated collective and political events. If the reference of a poem is private - if it deals, for instance, with the death of a friend - then the reader cannot know that individual, and so he or she can only be a symbol. If, on the other hand, the reference of the poem is public - as in the case of Péri or the Châteaubriant hostages - then the reader is involved with the people concerned, even if only indirectly, and is likely to react immediately in terms of this collective involvement (i.e. politically), and only to see the hostages or Péri as symbols when enough time has gone by. It is understandable, therefore, that critics writing in the shadow of the war often failed to recognise the universal

import of Resistance poetry, and concluded that it was as perishable and ephemeral as the events which inspired it.

66. *Almanach des Lettres françaises*, p. 26.

67. 'L'Homme et le poète', p. 85.

68. 'Les mots, les mythes et les thèmes', *Poésie 43*, 12 (janvier-février 1943), p. 77.

69. *Poésie 42*, 4 (juillet-septembre 1942), p. 60.

70. *Le Mot d'ordre*, 23 septembre 1942, p. 2.

71. 'Picasso et la poésie', *Oeuvres complètes* IV, p. 404. Tzara makes this point again in 'Entretiens avec Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes': 'Pour ma part, à la poésie de circonstance, je préfère la poésie de *la* circonstance. Je veux dire par là que du particulier, il s'agit de passer à l'universel' (*Oeuvres complètes* V, p. 407). The idea of circumstantiality is also apparent in Eluard's claim, in 'Aujourd'hui la poésie', that 'tout poète est un poète de la *circonstance*: il crée pour répondre à une situation donnée, dont il n'est pas le maître' (*OC* II 872), and in his original intention to entitle his 1952 lecture, 'La Poésie de circonstance', 'De la poésie de circonstance à la poésie éternelle' (see *OC* II 931).

72. Quoted in Gaucheron, *La Poésie, la Résistance*, p. 246.

73. Zimmermann interview (1981), p. 23.

74. *Vivre en poésie*, p. 142.

75. *Entretiens avec Jean Rousselot*, p. 58.

76. See, for example, Joseph Rovan's poem, 'Art poétique 40':

> le roi de l'heure dicte ses arrêts
> et les paroles serves du devoir
> chantent la mort dans ses obscures valets

(*Confluences*, 4 (octobre 1941), p. 463), or Eluard's '"Un petit nombre d'intellectuels français s'est mis au service de l'ennemi"' (*OC* I 1254-5).

77. *Révolution nationale*, 1 février 1942, p. 3.

78. *L'Appel*, 23 mars 1944, p. 4.

79. *Révolution nationale*, 8 janvier 1944, p. 3. See also Henri Poulain, 'L'Ecrivain devant le drame actuel' (*La Gerbe*, 6 avril 1944, p. 4), Ramon Fernandez, 'Le Devoir des clercs' (*La Gerbe*, 7 novembre 1940, p. 1), 'Orion', 'La Responsabilité de l'oeuvre d'art' (*L'Action française*, 16-17 février 1941, p. 4), 'Don Quichotte', 'On demande des poètes' (*L'Appel*, 16 octobre 1941, p. 4), Gonzague Truc, 'Responsabilités littéraires' (*La Gerbe*, 22 juillet 1943, p. 6), Pierre Besson, 'Appel aux écrivains' (*L'Appel*, 18 septembre 1941, p. 5).

80. *La Gerbe*, 14 janvier 1943, p. 5.
The stand made by Collaborators against individualism in general, and literary individualism in particular, is noted in Chapter II (pp. 123-4).

81. *Gringoire*, 2 janvier 1941, p. 3.

82. 'Collaboration poétique', *Cahiers franco -allemands*, janvier-février 1944, p. 32.

83. *L'Action française*, 9-10 janvier 1943, p. 3.
The lack of Collaborationist poetry is an interesting phenomenon in itself. For examples of Pestour's work, which is consistently mediocre, see 'La flamme qui vole' (*L'Action française*, 31 août-1 septembre 1941, p. 3), and 'Bonne année à la France' (*L'Action française*, 2-3 janvier 1943, p. 3). The following is an excerpt from 'France d'abord' (*L'Action française*, 23-4 janvier 1943, p. 3):

> Or, la France aujourd'hui,
> C'est Pétain et nul autre,
> Rien ne restait sans lui
> De tout ce qui fut nôtre.
> (...)
> Mais avec lui tout peut
> Persister ou renaître
> Si tu l'aides, pour peu
> Que tu chasses les traîtres.

In 'Une page littéraire? Oui!', Roger Charmoy praises 'un admirable "Maréchal Pétain", by Max Frantel (*Révolution nationale*, 22 février 1942, p. 3); in 'Pour une poésie impure' (see note 79), Brasillach quotes from Paul Salleron's 'Le Chant des cadets de Saumur':

> Que voulez-vous nous n'avions plus d'armes
> Que voulez-vous l'armée n'était plus là
> Que voulez-vous la France était en flammes
> Que voulez-vous les civils étaient las
> Que voulez-vous la Loire était si belle
> Que voulez-vous Jeanne n'était pas là

(This apology for collaboration begs comparison with Eluard's Resistance poem, 'Couvre-feu' (*PV*; *OC* I 1108) - see below p. 147 .) Brasillach's own poems, collected in *Poèmes* and *Poèmes de Fresnes*, dwell uniquely on his personal sufferings: they are poems of circumstance in the Goethean sense.

84. *Le Surréalisme, même*, 2 (printemps 1957), unnumbered pages. Mayoux refers here to the poems collected in *Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là.*

85. 'Poésie, nous voilà', *Les Lettres françaises*, 80 (3 novembre 1945), p. 5.

86. 'Entretiens avec Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes', *Oeuvres complètes* V, p. 407.

CHAPTER TWO

VOICING *PATRIE* IN RESISTANCE POETRY

'Le mot "France" avait des significations, un contenu différent suivant qui le prononçait.'
(Aragon)[1]

INTRODUCTION

Resistance poetry, as we have seen, was criticised both during and after the war for its patriotic content. The fact that many Resistance poets devoted a substantial part of their poetry to the cause of the French *patrie* led certain critics to liken them, dismissively, to Paul Déroulède. Patriotism or nationalism (a distinction is not usually made by the critics in question) was regarded as a subject matter too conventional and too reactionary for poetry. It was noted in the Introduction that these criticisms were often made by surrealists. Amongst the surrealist critics, Benjamin Péret argued the case against nationalism in poetry most forcefully in *Le Déshonneur des poètes*. The various strands of criticism that are seen piecemeal and left undeveloped in the remarks of other critics are gathered together and argued vociferously by Péret. His argument, which is typical and representative, is worth examining in more depth.

Péret uses the word 'nationalisme' throughout this essay, except on one occasion where he refers to Masson's patriotism in order to avoid repeating himself (p. 83). The two terms are no doubt synonymous in his mind. Following his understanding of both nationalism and poetry, he considered the two to be incompatible. The essay is based on his belief that Resistance poets had 'dishonoured' poetry by using it to promote the cause of nationalism; indeed, in Péret's mind, the nationalist content of Resistance poetry disqualifies it from being poetry: he refers to it as such only in inverted commas. It is necessary to look in some detail at Péret's view of both poetry and nationalism in order to understand why he believes that they are mutually exclusive.

In *Le Déshonneur des poètes*, Péret clearly speaks in the name of a continuing tradition of surrealism. For a further description of the Surrealist view of poetry, which Péret defends here, I would refer the reader back to Chapter I, pp. 27-30. The role of the poet, according to Péret, is permanently to blaspheme against the established order of society and never to promote or give confidence in that order:

> le poète n'a pas (...) à désarmer les esprits en leur insufflant une confiance sans limite en un père ou un chef contre qui toute critique devient sacrilège. Tout au contraire, c'est à lui de prononcer les paroles toujours sacrilèges et les blasphèmes permanents. (pp. 74-5)

The poet, who by definition fights against oppression, must also voice an opposition to dogma, the instrument of oppression: 'le poète lutte contre toute oppression: celle de l'homme par l'homme d'abord et l'oppression de sa pensée par les dogmes religieux, philosophiques ou sociaux' (p. 75). The poet is comparable to the heretic 'dont le rôle intellectuel et social est toujours révolutionnaire puisqu'il remet en question les principes sur lesquels s'appuie le mythe pour se momifier dans le dogme' (p. 81).[2]

Nationalism, as Péret saw it, was such a dogma. In promoting its cause, Resistance poets had sided with 'les forces de régression' (p. 76) and dishonoured 'la poésie comprise comme libération totale de l'esprit humain' (p. 87). Péret was not surprised to find Christianity and nationalism voiced together in Resistance poetry; it is as if, he says, the poets wanted to show that 'dogme religieux et dogme nationaliste ont une commune origine et une fonction sociale identique' (p. 82).

For Péret, nationalism, like its alleged counterpart, Christianity, was indisputably an established order. Almost invariably in this essay, Péret uses the word 'patrie' in conjunction with the word 'chef'. Nationalism, as he describes it, is strongly authoritarian. Resistance poets may have joined its cause in all good faith, as part of the overall attempt to combat Nazism, but in Péret's mind, nationalism and freedom, like nationalism and poetry, are contradictory terms. Nationalism is destined ultimately to restrict freedom: 'la patrie et le chef (..) n'ont plus de nos jours de moyens de régner sur les esprits que par la contrainte' (p. 79).

Péret intimates here, and in a later reference to 'les tenants *actuels* de la patrie' (my italics, p. 82), that nationalism may once have been different. Twice in *Le Déshonneur des poètes,* Péret contrasts the nationalism of Resistance poets with the creative spirit that had inspired the French Revolution. It can be inferred from the comparison that this spirit was also a spirit of nationalism, although Péret noticeably and no doubt deliberately avoids using any such words to denote it. He refers instead to 'la pensée créatrice des révolutionnaires de l'An II ou de la Russie de 1917' (p. 80).

The association of the French and Russian revolutions is perhaps intended to suppress any connotation of nationalism. A direct comparison between the Revolutionary of 1793 and the patriot of 1945 suggests nonetheless that for Péret, the Revolutionary was also a patriot, albeit of a very different kind: 'le révolutionnaire de l'An II ou de 1917 créait la société nouvelle tandis que le patriote et le Stalinien d'aujourd'hui en profitent' (pp. 80-81). The idea that French nationalism might once have been different is also implied in Péret's description of nationalism in 1945 as 'un mythe agonisant' (p. 80), or as a myth that has ossified into dogma (p 81). In contrast to this, Péret writes that the poets of the French (and Russian) Revolutions had expressed 'la pensée et l'espoir de tout un peuple imbu du même mythe ou animé du même élan' (p. 80). Again, this suggests that the nationalist myth in France had once been alive and healthily aspirational. Yet Péret refrains from referring to the myth that had inspired the French people in 1793 as a myth of nationalism, doubtless because he believed that the word 'nationalisme' had, by the time of the Second World War, become 'un mot d'ordre' (p. 86) that signified only an acceptance of the status quo.

It is very probable that Péret considered that the kind of nationalism informing Resistance poetry was substantially different from the kind of nationalism that had fired Year II of the Revolution. What is certain is that the principle of nationalism condemned in *Le Déshonneur des poètes* is viewed by Péret in the same light as the patriotism that he had attacked in the poems of *Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là* (1936). Forever rebelling against the established tenets of the day, surrealist poets constantly pilloried the French *patrie* and French patriots.

It is worth noting that in their own surrealist days, Aragon, Eluard and Desnos had attacked patriotism and its defenders just as strongly as Péret, and for precisely the same reasons as he outlines in *Le Déshonneur des poètes*. All three poets were amongst the signatories of a letter addressed to Paul Claudel, dated July 1925. Claudel, who was then French ambassador in Japan, had recently attacked the surrealist movement for its immorality. The surrealists responded by collectively dissociating themselves from everything that France represented (including a restrictive morality), and by warning Claudel that poetry and patriotism were incompatible:

> Il ne reste debout qu'une idée morale, à savoir par exemple qu'on ne peut être à la fois ambassadeur de France et poète. Nous saisissons cette occasion pour nous désolidariser publiquement de tout ce qui est français, en paroles et en actions.[3]

French patriotism, being intrinsically oppressive, was the stuff that wars were made of. In 1925, the French *patrie* was visibly the oppressor in the Rif war. In response to the question, 'Que pensez-vous de la guerre du Maroc?', posed in the Communist paper *Clarté*, Aragon responded: 'Le fanatisme des patriotes toujours menaçant, je le combattrai partout où je le rencontrerai'; he signs off with the words: 'Je suis, Messieurs, à vos côtés contre la patrie'.[4] Eluard's reply stresses that freedom can only be attained through the defeat of the French *patrie* and its aggressive self-assurance:

> La France est un pays canaille qui rit, qui rit toujours, bassement, de toute grandeur, de toute violence, de toute nudité. Que ses ennemis triomphent, qu'ils l'humilient, qu'ils la contraignent à demander les coups qui l'achèveront, je ne puis en attendre que la Liberté.[5]

According to surrealists, writing for the most part from a Marxist standpoint in the 1920s and 1930s, 'patrie' was one of the watchwords of middle class morality in France; it signified authoritarianism, militarism and above all oppression. It by no means corresponded to any popular urge in France. Dedicated to the promotion of freedom in all spheres, surrealists were bound to combat patriotism for as long as they saw the French *patrie* as an establishment that repressed political and intellectual freedoms both in France and abroad.

For erstwhile surrealists like Aragon, Eluard and Desnos, who became laureates of the French *patrie* during the Resistance, the notions of *patrie* and patriotism in France had evidently changed since 1936. For Péret, who saw the war out in Mexico where he continued the tradition of surrealism, *patrie* and patriotism continued to signify authoritarianism and oppression. In *La Poésie, la Résistance,* Gaucheron points out that it was difficult for critics like Péret, living away from France during the war, to appreciate the difference between 'le mensonge patriotique et un honneur qui était aussi bien individuel que national' (p. 159). The 'mensonge patriotique' to which Gaucheron refers here is presumably the patriotism voiced by the Vichy government and its supporters during the war. If Péret knew that there had been two types of patriotism at work and at war throughout the Occupation, then he evidently did not consider their conflict to be worthy of mention. In my mind it is crucial to emphasise that patriotism and the French *patrie* did not mean the same thing to everyone in France at the time. Consequently, a large part of this chapter is devoted to highlighting the differences between Vichy's patriotism and that of Resisters, as voiced by Resistance poets. The image of the French *patrie* given in Resistance poetry is contrasted with the image of France presented in Pétain's speeches and in the collaborationist press.

In order clearly to mark the distinction between the conflicting representations of the French *patrie*, I have used different terms to denote them. 'Le pays légal' is used to denote France as it actually was during the Occupation, and to denote the concept of *patrie* that was promoted by Vichy. 'Le pays réel' is used to denote the concept of *patrie* that is voiced in Resistance poetry and that was fought for by Resistance patriots.[6]

After the first section of this chapter, which outlines the development of nationalism in France, I have used the words 'patriotism' and 'patrie' in preference to 'nationalism' and 'nation', for the following reasons.

Resistance poets themselves rarely use the word 'nation', appearing to prefer either 'patrie' or 'pays'. Aragon is a notable exception. In 'De l'exactitude historique en poésie', for example, he refers to 'les images de la nation' (*EEP* 95). This, as it will become clear, is perfectly in keeping with Aragon's overall attempt, echoed by

many Resistance poets, to restore the idea of nation that had originated in France at the time of the Revolution. What Aragon uses the word 'nation' to signify effectively changes the meaning that it had acquired since the late nineteenth century. The opening section of the chapter shows that by 1940, 'nation' had long signified, in France and elsewhere, an exclusive territory, marked by national boundaries. This idea of nation was perpetuated in the aggressiveness of National Socialism and in the chauvinism of Vichy's National Revolution. Aggressiveness is certainly the defining characteristic of 'nation' as Jouve uses it in his wartime poetry: he refers, for example, to 'l'ange destructeur héros des nations' (*VP* 181) and to 'la vague immense des nations / (...) moutonnante de colère' (*VP* 186). The French *patrie* (or 'nation' as Aragon refers to it in 'De l'exactitude historique en poésie') emerges in Resistance poetry as a spiritual territory, opposed to the chauvinism and the aggressiveness that were then considered to be inherent in the idea of nation.

Nationalism is a political philosophy. While it would be accurate to refer to the nationalism described by National Socialism or by Pétain's National Revolution, no political doctrines are prescribed in Resistance poetry.

Nationalism, furthermore, had acquired a sense of authoritarianism and militarism by the time of the Second World War. Péret repeatedly emphasises its authoritarianism in *Le Déshonneur des poètes*. In 'Pierre Seghers et le romancero des années noires', Gaucheron makes another objection to the comparison made by Péret and others between Resistance poetry and the jingoistic versifying of Paul Déroulède. He qualifies Déroulède's work as 'le nationalisme des conscripteurs' and contrasts it with 'le patriotisme des volontaires' that is voiced in Resistance poetry (*Europe* 278). He goes on to stress that Resisters - poets and partisans - were for the most part pacifists; they were patriots who were instinctively opposed to nationalist ideologies:

> La majeure partie de ceux qui prirent les armes dans ce combat étaient des pacifistes - "des coeurs qui haïssaient la guerre", comme dit Desnos - qui savaient à quoi s'en tenir vis-à-vis des idéologies nationalistes militaristes; et ils furent des patriotes.
> (*Europe* 278)

Patriotism implies a voluntary, instinctive and heartfelt attachment to a country. It certainly seems the better word to use to denote the type of sentiment expressed in

Resistance poetry. This general sentiment is aptly summed up in Jouve's description of his own reaction to the outbreak of both world wars: 'Deux fois j'ai été emporté par la passion double, d'ordre très fondamental: la fureur de la liberté et la tendresse d'appartenir à un sol' (*En miroir* 86).

While not all patriots can be classified as nationalists, no nationalist would surely object to being called a patriot. Pétain and the former members of 'Action Française' who made up his entourage at Vichy were nationalists in the tradition of Barrès. In their attempts to promote a 'Révolution Nationale', they made frequent references to the French *patrie,* which figured in the Revolution's tripartite motto. I refer, then, to the patriotism and to the concept of the French *patrie* of Resisters and Collaborators alike. The distinction between the two is marked by the distinguishing terms, *le pays réel* and *le pays légal.*

One further point of terminology should be clarified here. The term 'Nazism' is used in this chapter to cover both National Socialism and what is more commonly referred to as French fascism.[7] There are two main reasons for this. First, for poets writing at the time, it seemed unnecessary to distinguish between German Nazism and native French fascism: the ideologies were regarded as equally threatening and equally repellent. Second, French fascism is usually distinguished from Nazism on the grounds that its anti-semitism is based on historical and national rather than racial concerns. However, there was a clear racial element in the frequent condemnations of Jews in collaborationist papers. Take the examples of Georges Montandon, described as a 'professeur d'ethnologie au collège de France', who wrote articles in the collaborationist press describing the physiology of Jews,[8] and this warning in *L'Appel:* 'Attention, méfiance. Pour nous, le problème juif est le problème de tous les juifs. Nous sommes devant un fait de RACE et non de simple RELIGION' (22 mai 1941, p. 6). The distinction between French fascism and Nazism was certainly muddied during the war. For this reason, and because of the fact that Resistance poets make no distinction themselves, 'Nazism' is used to refer to the dominant ideology attacked in Resistance poetry.

The chapter opens with a short exposition of French nationalism which stresses its different accents since the time of the French Revolution. Vichy's National Revolution is then described and situated within this historical context. Resistance poets frequently voiced a sense of exile and disorientation in Occupied and Vichy France. This is examined, and taken as a measure of the poets' opposition to the idea of France that was promoted, officially, after the Armistice. The concept of France given in the collaborationist press and in Pétain's speeches, and the concept of France found in Resistance poetry, are qualified respectively as *le pays légal* and *le pays réel.* They are both defined as aspiration myths. The counter-myth of Resistance poets - *le pays réel* - is then examined as it emerges in the poetry through the themes of France's historical, cultural and natural heritage, and, finally, through the related themes of love and *fraternité.*

Certain critics have contested the right of Resistance poetry to be considered as poetry because of its patriotism. This is based on the assumption that patriotism is intrinsically reactionary, conformist and authoritarian. The present chapter challenges such a view, by situating the patriotism of Resistance poets within the context of Occupied and Vichy France, and by indicating precisely what species of *patrie* these poets were defending and promoting in their work. It is a vital stage in my overall argument that this poetry is worthy of consideration as such.

I DIFFERENT STAGES OF FRENCH NATIONALISM, 1789-1940[9]

The idea of nation has had shifting accents in France, as elsewhere, since it was first formulated. Before the French Revolution, the French nation (like all other nations) was identified completely with the absolute monarch of the day. E.H. Carr points out that Rousseau helped found modern nationalism by first rejecting the idea that the nation was embodied in the monarch, and by positing an identification of nation and people. Carr argues that this identification became a fundamental principle both of the French and of the American revolutions (p. 7).

The French nation was originally envisaged by Sieyès as an embodiment of certain moral values that had originated in the Enlightenment ideal of liberal humanism. The

nation was hailed as the champion of ideals such as freedom, justice and *fraternité:* ideals that were universal as well as national. The rights of nations consciously derived from and were subordinated to the rights of man. Nations in general were regarded as sublimated individuals; any nation which failed to respect the rights of its own citizens or of other nations was thought to deny its own essential character. *Fraternité* involved a will to protect the rights of the individual, which extended generously towards other nations. Article 35 of Robespierre's project for the 'Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen' reads: 'Les hommes de tous les pays sont frères, et les différents peuples doivent s'entr'aider, selon leur pouvoir, comme les citoyens du même Etat.'[10]

Less than a hundred years later, this generous ideal of Revolutionary nationalism was directly challenged in France. In the 1871 civil war, the Republican nationalism of the Communards clashed violently with the right-wing nationalism of the French government under Thiers. The defeat of the Communards marked the end of French nationalism as the Revolution had known it.

After the Franco-Prussian war, nationalism in France was characterised by chauvinism and *revanchisme.* These are both evident in the writings and the political activities of Déroulède, who formed the 'Ligue des patriotes' in 1882. The League had a strongly territorial and militarist concept of *patrie;* it demanded the return of Alsace and Lorraine, gave support to rifle clubs and societies for physical training, and was distinctly anti-German in flavour.

The Dreyfus affair opened a new phase of French nationalism and evidenced the extent to which it differed from the Revolutionary ideal. In October 1894, the French Jewish army captain, Dreyfus, was arrested on a charge of espionage for Germany. He was condemned to deportation for life. Dreyfus's friends and supporters worked to prove his innocence, and by 1898 it was apparent to many that the evidence on which Dreyfus had been convicted was not altogether convincing. This led to the French army being attacked for the way in which the trial had been conducted. Certain nationalists, including Maurice Barrès, objected to these attacks on the grounds that they undermined French stability. In answer to the 'Ligue des droits de l'homme',

formed by the supporters of Dreyfus, Barrès's followers founded the 'Ligue de la patrie française'. The clear implication of this was that the rights of the individual could be sacrificed for the sake of the nation: a nation not only safeguarded, but symbolised, by the French army.

Barrès, one of Dreyfus's most vociferous opponents, was in the forefront of the new nationalist revival in France. Robert Soucy writes:

> Barrès taught a different kind of nationalism, which placed national self-interest (or egoism) above all other principles,which was indifferent to the fate of other nations, which called for economic and intellectual protectionism, which glorified the army and military power, and which subordinated individual rights to *raison d'état*. In short, Barrès helped reverse the previous meaning of nationalism for many. (p. 10)

This new nationalism was outlined by Barrès in *La Terre et les morts* and developed in his *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme*. It was an integral nationalism, which emphasised the importance of French ancestry and having psychic roots in the soil of France. Barrès writes: 'Notre terre nous donne une discipline et nous sommes les prolongements de nos morts. Voilà sur quelle réalité nous devons nous fonder. (...) Pour permettre à la conscience d'un pays tel que la France de se dégager, il [faut] enraciner les individus dans la terre et dans les morts' (*Scènes...*, p. 92).

Those who blamed Dreyfus for threatening the integrity of the French nation considered it significant that he was Jewish. Anti-semitism was appended to French nationalism during and after the Dreyfus affair. In 1886, Drumont published a violently anti-semitic pamphlet, *La France Juive,* and in 1889 he created the 'Ligue anti-sémite'. In *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme,* which was written largely in response to the Dreyfus Affair, Barrès claimed that no one with origins outside the country could respond to the symbols of soil, flag, honour and ancestry as could a true French patriot. He writes: 'Les Juifs n'ont pas de patrie au sens où nous l'entendons. Pour nous, la patrie, c'est le sol et les ancêtres, c'est la terre de nos morts. Pour eux, c'est l'endroit où ils trouvent leur plus grand intérêt' (p. 72). Integral nationalism, which envisaged the French nation as an exclusive territory, was far removed from the Revolutionary ideal of a universal *fraternité*.

Barrès's nationalism strongly influenced Charles Maurras, who founded 'Action Française'. Formed in opposition to the Republican regime, 'Action Française' promoted a monarchist ideal of authority unfettered by parliamentary democracy. His quarrel with the ruling powers of the time led Maurras to make his famous distinction between 'le pays légal' - the selfish, impotent France of Republicanism and universal suffrage - and 'le pays réel' - the true and ideal France as envisaged by the élite of 'Action Française'. This reactionary, royalist group preached a hatred of all foreigners, Jews and freemasons, and an opposition to democracy and Republicanism. In *Kiel et Tanger* (1910), Maurras voiced a bitter indictment of a Republic whose degeneracy prevented it from waging war.

The ideals of Barrès, Maurras and the 'Action Française' carried French nationalism some of the way towards the totalitarian nationalism that is a distinguishing mark of Fascist states. Totalitarian nationalism is, as Carr puts it, the 'exaltation of the nation as an object of worship and an end in itself' (p. 41). It is a type of nationalism 'in which humanity and the individual disappear and nothing remains but the nationality, which has become the one and the whole' (Kohn, p. 20).

From the late nineteenth century until the 1930s, both nation and nationalism were regarded as the exclusive property of certain right-wing ideologues in France. There was some hint of a reversal in this trend in 1936, when the Right, banded together in the 'Front National', was defeated by the Republican 'Front Populaire'. In May 1936, there was an apparent upsurge of Republican nationalism when 400,000 Socialists and Communists filed past the 'Mur des Fédérés'; shouts of 'Vive le Front Populaire!' were echoed by cries of 'Vive la Commune!'. However, this triumph of Republicanism was short-lived. The Popular Front's commitment to peace left it ill-equipped to deal with Hitler's mounting military aggression in Europe. When the German invasion of Poland finally forced France to declare war on Germany, the declaration was met with resignation rather than enthusiasm, and France was easy prey to the superior military might of the German army. With the defeat of France came the death of the Third Republic and, for a while, of Republicanism itself.

Republicanism and its keeper, the Popular Front, were constantly made to shoulder the blame for France's defeat by Vichy and the collaborationist press. Herbert Tint makes the interesting point that although the Third Republic was by no means as culpable as Pétain's Riom trials made out, it was nonetheless 'responsible' for the defeat in so far as it had failed to elicit the level of national pride necessary in a country going to war. This, he argues, was because nationalism had been so long associated with reactionary, monarchist and traditionalist values in France that it found no home in the democratic republicanism of the Popular Front coalition:

> people in high and low places had grown accustomed in the course of over half a century to distinguishing between the Third Republic and the *patrie*. The *patrie* represents something that is worth fighting for. In 1940 there were few who thought that the Third Republic was worth fighting for. The"real"*patrie* of the "Action Française" or the *patrie* of the left of 1789 might have found active defenders. (p. 232)

Tint's argument usefully highlights a challenge that would be taken up during the Occupation by both the Vichy government and its opponents. In 1940, both sides were faced with the task of creating an ideal around which a defeated people could rally. Vichy's response - the attempted reconstruction of France in a 'Révolution Nationale' - is outlined in the following section.

II *LE PAYS LEGAL*

1. VICHY'S NATIONAL REVOLUTION

The degree of alarm and disorientation experienced nationally after France's defeat is not to be underestimated. The general theme of disorientation is examined in some detail below, through the work of Resistance poets. But it was not, as this might imply, caused exclusively by the Vichy government. Kedward points out in 'Patriots and patriotism in Vichy France' that the strong authoritarianism adopted by those at Vichy answered a very basic need in a mass of French people who had suffered the *débâcle* and then the chaotic exodus from the north. The promise of an 'Ordre Nouveau' to supplant the chaos and disorder experienced by many was, at first, widely appealing. The exodus left a legacy of resentment against the authorities who had fled, leaving their flock to fend for themselves. This resentment fuelled an

acceptance of the orderly, caring patriotism of Vichy, and gave credence to one of the ideological mainstays of the National Revolution: namely, its rejection of the Third Republic, and republicanism in general. The widespread disillusionment meant an easy fall from grace for the Popular Front coalition, and it was a short step from there to dissociating republicanism from true patriotism. From examining first-hand accounts of the *exode,* Kedward concludes that

> words associated with the administration, the bureaucracy, the government of the day and the politicians quickly became ones with strong anti-patriotic connotations used to communicate feelings of despair, betrayal, anger, resentment and victimization, whereas more idealistic words signifying leadership, a caring authority, powers of decision and flexibility became the good, warm words of hope, recovery and patriotism. (p. 182)

The idea of rebuilding France from the ashes of republicanism had a natural appeal; there was no need, as Kedward points out, to impose the New Order from above: it was already being demanded from below. There can be little doubt that Pétain spoke for the majority of French people in 1941 when he said: 'La révolution nationale signifie la volonté de renaître, affirmée soudain, du fond de notre être, un jour d'épouvante et de remords.'[11]

Vichy's emphasis on national reconstruction scarcely balanced its emphasis on the necessary and well-deserved humiliation and remorse of the French nation. French citizens were not allowed to forget that their defeat was the inevitable and almost just result of Republican politics and ideology. They were collectively guilty of having given a decadent Republican regime free rein to destroy France in an excess of egotistic, unpatriotic individualism.

Anti-republicanism was the cornerstone of the Vichy movement. The Riom Trials of 1942 were as much an exorcism of the Third Republic as a trial of Léon Blum, Daladier et al. Attacks on republicanism were commonly featured in the collaborationist press. This is a typical one: 'Si la France s'est écroulée en 1940, c'est à la République qu'elle le doit. C'est elle qui nous a conduits aux abîmes: elle est donc jugée.'[12] It is with clear relish that Brasillach wrote: 'La République est crevée qu'on le veuille ou non.'[13] He begins his indictment of republicanism with Danton, whom

he calls 'le digne précurseur des républicains de Stavisky'.[14] Georges Suarez also draws a parallel between present-day France and the France of 1793, to argue that the evils that had smitten France originated in the Revolution: 'le Front Populaire, comme le régicide de 1793, restera, dans l'Histoire, la ligne de départ des malheurs qui ont assailli la France.'[15] The anti-Republican sentiments spread by Vichy are well summed up in this extract from *Au Pilori:*

> C'est la liberté qui nous a conduits à l'esclavage.
> C'est l'égalité qui nous a courbés sous les ploutocrates.
> C'est la fraternité qui a tout corrompu de haut en bas.
> Et c'est le suffrage universel qui nous imposait l'irresponsabilité du pouvoir.[16]

Vichy's message to the French nation was clear: the French Republic was dead, and not before time.

In its stead, Vichy proposed a national renaissance led by a strong authoritarian government that would have none of the constraints or the excesses of a parliamentary democracy. Its reconstruction of France centred on a return to traditionalist values that had been ignored under the old regime. The Republic's abstract principles of 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité' were replaced by an ethic of institutionalised discipline, resumed in the Vichy motto, 'Travail, Famille, Patrie'; essentially, Vichy's policy-making and ideology were conceived as an alternative to Republican thought.

Against the secularism of the Republic, the Catholic church was taken as a model for community life in its social conservatism. Family life was idealised by Vichy as a natural cell of the nation. Schools, which had been the instruments of republicanism in pre-war days, were to give pupils a strong moral grounding in the values of God, Family and Country. The youth of Vichy France were further disciplined by the 'Chantiers de la Jeunesse', which combined moral instruction in nationalism with another of Vichy's favourite themes: the encouragement of 'un retour à la terre'. The return to the earth policy soon became a focal point of the National Revolution. It hinged ideologically on Barrès's identification of *patrie* with 'la terre et les morts'; the earth, rural society and the peasant way of life were the ideal symbols and guardians of traditionalist values in France.

Two points must be made in conclusion to this brief outline. First, the Vichy government was neither a puppet of the Nazi occupiers nor a simple administrative body, formed to tide France over the war. Its members and its supporters had a firm ideal of the type of France they wanted to live in both during and after the war. Witness the National Revolution itself, with its emphasis on 'la France éternelle'[17] and on a moral and spiritual reconstruction of the French nation. Jaray's introduction to Pétain's speeches highlights the ideological nature of Pétain's proposed reformation of France:

> il [nous] convie à une réforme morale, intellectuelle et sociale, autant que politique, pour tout dire à une révolution spirituelle, et ce sont les révolutions spirituelles qui déterminent le cours de l'histoire; une réforme profonde de l'Etat en effet, n'est qu'éphémère, si elle n'est fondé sur cette "réformation".[18]

In so far as the National Revolution embodied an ideal of France that differed from that of Resisters, it became, along with the Occupation and the imposition of Nazi ideology, a force for Resistance writers to contend with.

Second, it is worth stressing that Pétainism was recognised by many French people at the time as legal patriotism. It had the full support of official institutions such as the police force and the judiciary, and its legitimacy was widely propagated in the media that were under official control. Furthermore, Pétainism, unlike the Occupation, had not been forced upon the French nation: it initially held the position it did through popular acclaim. Resisters, on the other hand, were branded as traitors to the French *patrie,* and de Gaulle was seen as the self-styled leader of an unpatriotic and initially unpopular opposition to Pétainism. It is easy to forget, now that the Resistance has become one of the greatest symbols of French patriotism, that it was regarded as fully the reverse of this in the heyday of Franco-German collaboration. In the years between the Armistice and the Liberation, when Resistance poets set about recreating a feeling of national pride, they were not shoring up the establishment, but opposing it. Contrary to Péret's belief, their patriotism was far from conformist.

2. EXILE, ESTRANGEMENT, DISORIENTATION : A LOSS OF IDENTITY

Resistance poets were clearly ill-at-ease within the new France that followed the Armistice. In this section, the themes of exile, estrangement and disorientation are examined as proof of these poets' ideological distance from the notion of France that gained credence within *le pays légal*.

Jules Supervielle was literally in exile from France. His *Poèmes de la France malheureuse* are infused with a sense of nostalgia and quiet outrage at the defeat and humiliation of France. His feeling of exile is quickened by the fact that he feels unable to recognize his adopted *patrie* in the images he receives of the Occupation: images of 'La France en misère' (p. 17), of imprisonment, and of a ruined nation divided in two and overrun by enemy troops. In 1940, he asks: 'Est-ce donc elle, la patrie. / Ce corps à la face des cieux?' (p. 14). France herself is 'longue à se reconnaître' (p. 13) in this portrait of ruin and despair.

Supervielle's sentiments of exile and estrangement are shared by many poets who remained on French soil during the war. Like Supervielle, some were literally exiled from their home towns and familiar surroundings. Like many French people, forced by the *exode* to move to the south of France, Aragon and Elsa lived, as Aragon puts it, 'dans l'exil / D'un paradis terrestre auquel secrètement / nous préférons l'enfer Paris et ses tourments' (*EEP*, 125). The very beauty of the southern countryside alienates the poet: 'il n'est pas le mien ce ciel et pas le mien / ce pays d'oliviers qui fleure les fenouils' (*EEP*, 124).

When Loys Masson writes of being outcast and exiled in his own country, this, too, reflects a true experience, since Masson was forced to live under a false identity in France:

> c'était l'exil tout autour; j'étais un proscrit sous la feuillée.
> (...)
> On m'a pris ma lumière et ma maison, on m'a pris jusqu'à mon nom
> et français je suis en France étranger. (*LNM* 11)

As well as expressing their own real experiences of exile, some poets dedicated their work to people of different nationalities who had been forced to flee the Nazi regime

and take refuge in France. The words of a Hungarian exile, in Alain Borne's poem, 'Mélopée', could well be those of an estranged French citizen: 'Je ne trouve plus l'odeur de mon pays dans le pain du soir / même sous la robe chaude qui m'accueille' (*Co* 34). In 'Les Folies Giboulées,' Aragon addresses a German exile, whose crisis of disorientation makes him a symbol of 1941:

> Tu cherches partout une ombre d'emprunt
> Exilé des murs et du sol commun
> Symbole ambulant de quarante-et-un (*YE* 51)

The theme of exile, as this last line suggests, is best seen in a symbolic light. As in the case of Supervielle, these real experiences of exile become metaphors of a more general disorientation, which stems not only from the fall of France, but from the banishment of *le pays réel* from a defeated, occupied France. Most of the poets who describe the same sense of disorientation were exiled only in this metaphorical way. Unable to accept the images of *patrie* given in Occupied and Vichy France, they are left feeling homeless and estranged.

Emmanuel searches within France for the lost *patrie* that he holds in his memory: 'Où es-tu mon pays d'eau vive et de forêts / pays aimé des morts, terre fidèle et tendre?' (*LGP*, 93). The first of his *Cantos* describes the same search for an irreplaceable *patrie:*

> Qui a perdu sa patrie
> jamais n'en trouve une autre
> Mais où est, à moi, ma patrie? (p. 9)

This bears direct comparison with what Jouve writes from his forced exile in Switzerland:

> Errant et sans patrie
> Je fus depuis l'aurore
> Errant et sans patrie
> Dans la patrie (*VP* 182)

Aragon's first experience of being dispossessed predates and prefigures his actual exile from Paris. It is dated back precisely to his hearing news of the fall of France:

> Quand la nouvelle vint frapper au coeur la France
> Vous ne pouvez savoir quelle fut ma souffrance
> Dans l'école déserte au soir d'un bourg normand (*EEP* 122)

He compares his grief with the legendary madness of King Charles - the 'monarque dément qu'on a dépossédé' (*EEP* 124). In 'La nuit de Dunkerque', the defeat of

France is once again signalled as the root cause of a general sentiment of dispossession. Aragon labels the soldiers at Dunkirk 'des Jean-sans-terre' (*YE* 39).[19] Sandwiched between sea and land, with the land fast disappearing under a high tide, their plight becomes a resounding symbol of dispossession: 'La France sous nos pieds comme une étoffe usée / s'est petit à petit à nos pas refusée' (*YE* 39).

The territory that Aragon regrets here is not to be found in Occupied or Vichy France. In 'Lancelot', Aragon describes himself 'En étrange pays dans mons pays lui-même' (*YE* 92). Later, he looks back to this as a time when 'nous étions des étrangers en France / Des mendiants sur nos propres chemins' (*DF* 57).

The common sense of dispossession and estrangement within France itself is, as Ian Higgins points out, strong evidence that for Resistance poets, the French *patrie* was something other than a mere parcel of territory.[20] The land from which Emmanuel feels exiled is, for example, 'ce cher, cet immense pays qui me semblait tissé de toutes les vertus essentielles de l'homme'.[21] The ideal nature of the Resisters' *patrie* is an essential point which will be returned to often in the course of this chapter, and dealt with specifically in the section entitled 'A natural heritage'.

A further token of the poets' disorientation is their failure to recognize what they consider to be France in their 'new' surroundings. It is as if France has donned a strange disguise made up of violence, fear and humiliation. This mask covers and stifles *le pays réel*, disfiguring France to such a degree that it is no longer recognizable. The new France is an alienating 'pays de fenêtres étranges' (Aragon; *EEP* 139) where, in Tardieu's words:

> Une vie imaginaire
> Sur les villes est posée.
> Partout de fausses lumières
> sont peintes sur les paupières
> des fenêtres enfermées. (*FC* 68)

The same idea of disguise comes into Aragon's 'Chanson du Franc-tireur', where an outlawed Resister addresses his *patrie*, travestied and betrayed by *le pays légal:*

> Ils t'ont couverte de prisons
> De ce masque affublée où grince
> l'énigme sourire de Reims
> sous les fleurs de la trahison (*DF* 44)

The notion of change invests many poems written in the war years. For Tardieu, as for Aragon, the very meaning of the word 'France' has changed:

> O pays nommé France
> En tombeau transformé,
> Signe de l'espérance
> Aux ténèbres jeté. (*JP* 92)

Once a sign of hope, France now signifies death and spiritual impoverishment. Tardieu addresses his new country as a 'misère qui pense' (*JP* 92); A. Gibert, another patriot of *le pays réel* complains:

> Je n'y comprends plus rien, la France est un mystère
> (...)
> Je n'y comprends plus rien ... une métamorphose
> A changé les objets et même les humains (*Europe* 211-2)

Seghers witnesses the same bewildering metamorphosis in 'Les ornières du temps', where he writes: 'nous errons interdits dans un monde à l'envers' (*DP* 41). Masson, too, finds himself disorientated in a France of overturned values:

> (...) ma patrie sous un amas d'épines
> Agonise et chaque jour nous nous disons : Est-ce donc elle
> Ma patrie dont l'éclat passait celui de l'aventurine? (*LNM* 62)

Particularly difficult to bear was the transformation of Paris into an occupied city. This anonymous tract mourns the loss of France's glorious capital:

> Vous piétinez Paris, O collaborateurs
> Ce Paris ébloui, Fleur de toute une race
> Que baisent deux mille ans de gloire et de grandeur
> Soudain muets devant votre stupide audace (*Europe* 209)

Paris was transformed on several levels during the Occupation. It lost its status in France as the seat of government and culture, it was marked oppressively with the presence of the occupying forces, and, importantly, it no longer symbolised an ideal of freedom and revolutionary patriotism in the eyes of the French people. Charles Vildrac discovered there a 'Morne Paris coupé du monde / Et dépossédé de toi-même.'[22] Seghers writes: 'Je vais dans un Paris qui ne me connaît pas' (*DP* 15). He fails to recognize a Paris submerged in a spirit of *attentisme;* he describes the new city as

> Un Paris étranger qui se tend et attend
> Le printemps (...)
> Un Paris d'un hiver pierreux et dur, qui dure (*DP* 15)

Eluard also documents a change in Paris, evident in the physical hardship and the moral lassitude that now seem to dominate the city:

> Paris a froid, Paris a faim
> Paris ne mange plus de marrons dans la rue.
> Paris a mis de vieux vêtements de vieille
> Paris dort tout debout, sans air, dans le métro. (*ARA; OC* I 1230-31)

Edith Thomas's 'Retour à Paris' is infused with the same sense of melancholy and nostalgia. Her return to a deserted Paris, which she addresses as 'mon absence',[23] is coloured by a sense of loss. Like Seghers, she feels alienated by the change in Paris:

> Comme ces jardins
> sont abandonnés:
> fleurs fanées
> herbes grenées,
> et la guerre au bout de l'allée
> nulle part ne puis m'en aller.[24]

As some of these examples demonstrate, images of a change in France are often accompanied by a strong feeling of personal alienation. The connection between the two is brought out particularly clearly in the work of Emmanuel and Tardieu.

The first of Emmanuel's *Cantos,* as we have already seen, explicitly evokes the loss of his homeland. This theme of dispossession and disorientation is developed throughout the *Cantos,* where it becomes clear that the loss experienced by Emmanuel is of a very intimate nature. The idea of having lost his homeland coincides with an acute sense of personal disorientation; it leaves the poet questioning his own identity and failing to recognize his physical surroundings:

> Je n'ai pas un visage à moi
> pas une entre toutes les pierres
> pas une ombre où me reposer
> pas une gorgée de lumière
> pas une chanson égarée (p. 17)

For Emmanuel, the loss of national identity effects a loss of personal identity, so close is the connection between the two.[25]

Tardieu's wartime poetry holds few direct references to the political climate in which it was written. Yet in this period, personal preoccupations inevitably coincided with historical, political reality. Consequently, certain recurring themes in Tardieu's poetry complement closely the more overtly political ideas of other poets. They also

give wider resonance to the sense of loss and change expressed in those of his own poems which identify a real political situation. In 'O pays nommé France', as we have seen, Tardieu witnesses a transformation in his country (*JP* 92); similarly, the opening lines of 'France retrouvée' describe a lost *patrie*, deformed by disease, violence and hatred, all of which are equated with the presence of the occupying forces (*JP* 107). These poems are exceptional only in their directness, for much of Tardieu's poetry of the time is infused with comparable images of the self and the surrounding world being in a state of flux and metamorphosis. His awareness and his fear of a sudden change in his surroundings coincides with the wartime experience of the French people in general, faced with the collapse of familiar landmarks in their national identity.

In 'Nuage artificiel', Tardieu describes the phenomenon of opening his eyes after a moment's unconsciousness to find the world formless and unrecognizable:

> Un instant d'absence
> au milieu du jour
> en rouvrant les paupières
> je n'ai rien reconnu.
>
> Démons, démons
> vous m'avez changé le monde!
> Je tremble de revoir ces brouillards ces fumées
> Nées sur vos pas de feutre; (...) (*JP* 50)

A similar kind of experience is noted in 'Aveugle'. The narrator here is a blind man, who relies absolutely on the stability of objects in order to find his way around. Being so dependent on the sureness of his surroundings, he is terrified by the possibility that they might change at any moment:

> Toutes les formes qui sont là
> toujours sur le point de partir
> les faubourgs hésitants, les maisons vagabondes
> les sons créés pour aussitôt mourir (*JP* 53)

The dilemma of having to face an unstable world, and the effort of finding a means to stabilise it are, significantly, shared by the blind man's fellow villagers. This is a dilemma faced by an entire community 'cherchant la trace exacte / et le son vrai des marteaux sur l'enclume / dans ce présent de mensonge et de nuit' (*JP* 53). In this final line, there is some suggestion that the experience described is caused by the present, public circumstances.

Exile, estrangement, disorientation: these themes are indicative of a bewildering loss of national identity, effected by the change in France that followed the defeat and the Armistice. Three tokens of this change in France are given repeated emphasis in the poetry of the time. First, the new France is referred to as a nation of isolated individuals, where the principles of love and *fraternité* are denied. Second, an attitude of defeatism and *attentisme* is described as having spread throughout the *patrie*. Finally, *le pays légal* is said to be invested with a strange silence. The poets' descriptions of this changed face of France are outlined below.

3 DESCRIPTIONS OF *LE PAYS LEGAL*

(a) Isolation and the denial of love

The themes of exile and alienation, which bear witness to the poets' feeling of having lost their national identity, are tokens also of their deep sense of isolation within *le pays légal*. As Emmanuel puts it, 'on est seul par millions sans patrie que la Peur' (*LGP* 94). The sense of solitude derives in part from the fact that the notion of France that was fostered during the Occupation was seriously at odds with the ideal of France that these poets, amongst others, held dear. Isolation resulted from being unable legally to hold and express a love for *le pays réel*. Aragon's feeling of estrangement feeds upon his forbidden love for France: 'En étrange pays dans mon pays lui-même / Je sais bien ce que c'est qu'un amour défendu' (*YE* 92). At a time when '[son] pays est amour défendu' (*YE* 53), Aragon's agony of exile from Paris is that of a lover separated from his loved one, for, as he says, 'Ceux qui s'aiment d'amour n'ont qu'elle pour adresse' (*YE* 43). As each 'dissident' guarded closely his or her memory of *le pays réel*, there evolved a sense of being separated from the rest of a country that seemed willing to accept France's change. In the words of Supervielle:

> Nous sommes très loin en nous-mêmes
> Avec la France dans les bras
> Chacun se croit seul avec elle
> Et pense qu'on ne le voit pas (*PFM* 14)

Le pays réel is therefore a frustrated love that gives rise to a sense of isolation within the new France. Furthermore, just as *le pays légal* frustrates the poets' love for their *patrie,* so too does it frustrate the concept of love itself. Aragon's line, 'Quand ton pays est amour défendu', synthesizes the ambiguity of the time: the Resisters' concept of 'pays' was a forbidden love and therefore one to be defended; at the same time, *le pays légal* is a country in which love is forbidden.

In what way did the new France 'forbid' the principle of love on which *le pays réel* thrives? The Occupation inevitably stamped on France the imprint of Nazi ideology. A dominant part of this ideology was the Nazi cult of virility and force. This combined with Nazism's chauvinistic, racial hatred and its unrelenting pursuit of violence to produce an ethic wholly at odds with the principles of love and *fraternité.*

In Resistance poetry, this alien, Nazi ethic is often expressed in terms of a death-cult that has invaded France. Jean Cayrol's 'Dormez-vous?' is a call to reawaken and harness Christian values, threatened by the dominant ethic of violence and death that was spread by propaganda (in the gossip columns of newspapers): 'la mort est déjà à cheval / on entend son galop dans l'écho du journal' (*Et nunc* 18). Eluard attacks collaborationist writers for using their words to bolster a morality centred on death:

> Belles paroles d'alliance
> Ils vous ont voilés de vermine
> Leur bouche donne sur la mort (*ARA; OC* I 1255)

He describes *le pays légal* as a place sapped of life in an all-consuming, hollow round of death:

> L'on va t'imposer la mort
> La mort légère et puante
> Qui ne répond qu'à la mort
> Tout va d'un lieu grondant de vie vers le désert (*ARA; OC* I 1256)

Eluard considered that during the Occupation, death was granted the status of an idol:

> La vie était distribuée
> Largement pour que la mort
> Prît au sérieux le tribut
> Qu'on lui payait sans compter (*SPI; OC* I 1062-3)

Nazism made a virtue of its cult of death and violence; for its followers, death became a guiding moral principle: 'Les bourreaux justifiaient la mort' (*ARA; OC* I 1271). At

the Liberation, Eluard remembers the Occupiers' obsessive reverence for death, and describes their salutes to Hitler as 'Leurs grands saluts à la misère et à la mort' (*ARA; OC* I 1259). Their fascination with death makes them a natural enemy: 'Nos ennemis ont besoin de tuer / Ils ont besoin d'être nos ennemis' (*ARA; OC* I 1256).

For Marcenac as for Eluard, the enemies' inclination for destroying life means that their own lives can only be justified by death:

> Ce qu'ils ont de vivant en eux
> S'est élevé contre la vie
> Les signes qu'ils essaient de faire
> Comme ils n'ont servi que la mort
> Elle seule peut les comprendre (*CF* 26)

Desnos's 'Chant du tabou' is a song voiced by Hitler's minions. In it, they emphasise their own regressive barbarity in pursuing a death cult: 'Partout où nous passons nous creuserons nos cimetières à la place des architectures' (*DA* 225). They extol all facets of death, worshipping it as their alibi and keeper and revelling in decomposition:

> Une mort magique nous garde, seule, dans ses étables et ses abattoirs.
> (...) Rien ne peut nous libérer du tragique destin que nous avons choisi
> en toi, nous, la foule allemande des déments et qui doutons de n'être
> pas morts déjà et vampires affamés en quête de pourriture et de néant.(*DA* 226)

Their espousal of an ethic of hatred, violence and death sets the Occupiers apart from the rest of humanity. This is told in Desnos's refrain: 'Le tabou est sur toi, le tabou est sur nous' (*DA,* 225-6).

Other Resistance poets lay similar emphasis on the isolation of Nazi soldiers, who relate to others only through violence. Such an emphasis may seem surprising, given that Nazism is better known for having fostered a uniform collectivism in its followers. This aspect of Nazism was certainly not ignored by the poets, who indeed regarded it as something just as threatening as the enemy's violent isolationism. Chapter III examines both aspects of the Occupier's presence in more detail. Here, I would draw attention briefly to parallels made between Nazism's cult of violence and the solitary nature of the enemy soldiers.

According to Marcenac, these are natural enemies, naturally isolated by their hatred:

Ils sont plus seuls chaque saison
Ils sont plus seuls que de raison
Le ciel le jour les abandonnent
Ils vivent dans un horizon
Où le regard a fait naufrage
Ils n'existent pas à nos yeux
Dans l'invisible de la haine
Ils n'ont plus la moindre épaisseur (*CF* 46)

Eluard's 'Douter du crime' presents brutality and isolation as symbiotic tendencies:

Une seule corde une seule torche un seul homme
Etrangla dix hommes
Brûla un village
Avilit un peuple (*PV; OC* I 1108)

In 'Novembre 1936', a pre-war poem inspired by the Spanish Civil War, Eluard had already linked Nazism's use of genocide with a desire for isolation. Through a reign of terror, he writes, his enemies ' font de leur mieux pour être seuls sur terre' (*CN; OC* I 801).

The isolative ideology spread by Nazism was incompatible with an ethic of love. In Eluard's view, the Occupiers' obsession with death has usurped the principle of love:

La mort était le dieu d'amour
Et les vainqueurs dans un baiser
S'évanouissaient sur leurs victimes
La pourriture avait du coeur
(*SPI; OC* I 1063)

Eluard's enemies are those who have forgotten 'la joie d'être aimé' (*AD; OC* I 1232). 'Le poème hostile' (*ARA*) describes the first of the collaborators fleeing to Germany. Again, this enemy is seen as one who has relinquished the right to love and to be loved. 'Dévoré par la haine', his heart is filled with 'le vertueux refus d'aimer' (*OC* I 1260). It is as if the Occupiers and Collaborators had found a distorted, twisted principle of love in their code of hatred and brutality:

Ils avaient mis en ordre
Sous le nom de richesse
Leur misère leur bien-aimée
Ils mâchonnaient des fleurs et des sourires
Ils ne trouvaient de coeur qu'au bout de leur fusil (*LT; OC* I 1216)

Alain Borne's poetry provides a striking example of this notion that the dominant Nazi motifs of violence and death had drained France of love. When asked what

essential themes inspired his poetry, Borne replied, 'l'horreur de la mort et l'amour de la vie'[26] Already present in his pre-war poetry,[27] these themes are intensified and given new significance by the circumstances of the war. The final poems of *Neige* introduce an important theme that Borne continues in *Contre-feu:* with the rise of Nazism, an era of violence had usurped a peaceful time of love and happiness.

'Automne', for example, refers to the autumn of 1939, when the killing time began: 'il y a chasse aux hommes cet automne' (*N* 39). Here, images of childhood are fused, menacingly, with images of blood and death:

> Les vieux fusils sommeillent près des vieilles poupées
> le plomb de nos soldats d'enfants coule en sang sur la terre
> les abeilles d'acier essaiment vers nos coeurs
> nouvelles fleurs d'où coulera le miel chaud de la mort (*N* 39)

Even simple pleasures, like the enjoyment of nature, are posited as a thing of the past, eclipsed by the all-embracing violence of the time:

> C'en est fini du vent léger
> qui laisse aux fleurs leur pollen
> le vent de sang qui vient des plaines
> plombe nos vies de son danger
> L'amour n'est plus sous l'or de mai (*N* 40)

Borne's insistence that a peaceful time has been lost develops easily into an idea dominating *Contre-feu*, that love has been eclipsed by violence. The two notions - love of life and sexual love - are linked by the pantheistic nature of Borne's concept of love.[28] In Borne's wartime poetry, love - and sexual love in particular - is presented as a sterile, corrupted thing, never seen in isolation from images of violence and death.

The love-poems of *Contre-feu* are embittered descriptions of the sterility of sexual love. Borne makes an association between this sterile sexual love and death, which makes clear his belief that the impossibility of love is a direct result of the violence suffered in war:

> Un lourd anneau de crime tourne nos fiançailles
> bientôt nous étendrons nos membres dans son lit
> la stérile semence coulera de nos flancs
> parmi les sangs épars des élus de la guerre (p. 51)

Borne is perhaps an exception amongst Resistance poets in the extent to which his expression of love is coloured by the violence of the time. His contention that 'Jamais l'amour ne fut plus loin', is, however, entirely typical. At a time when, as Jouve

says, 'jamais noire haine froide antihumaine / ne reluisit sur la noire terre si noirement',[29] descriptions of *le pays légal* are frequently marked by references to the absence or the impossibility of love.

The best known example of this is Aragon's 'Il n'y a pas d'amour heureux'. This poem develops a theme present elsewhere in Aragon's work, that happy human relations cannot co-exist with tense social and political circumstances. The couple's unhappiness is placed in the wider context of France's defeat; their ill-fated love for their *patrie* is what denies them the possibility of happiness:

> Il n'y a pas d'amour dont on ne soit flétri
> Et pas plus que de toi l'amour de la patrie
> Il n'y a pas d'amour qui ne vive de pleurs
> Il n'y a pas d'amour heureux (*DF* 30)

Some critics have interpreted this poem as a denial of Aragon's love for Elsa. Aragon was forced on two occasions to make a stand against this, and to emphasise the real significance of his statement in the poem. He explained to Francis Crémieux that 'ce qui est dit ici l'est sur le fond des malheurs de l'occupation' and asked, 'Comment aurait-il pu y avoir un amour heureux dans les conditions dramatiques de la France?'[30] In a later interview, he stressed again that 'à cette époque (...) on ne pouvait être heureux pas plus en amour qu'autrement' and argued that 'dans le malheur général (...) ce serait une simple monstruosité'.[31] Far from being a cynical appraisal of his own love, Aragon's poem is a statement of the impossibility of individual happiness in the midst of collective despair. At the same time, it is an indictment of *le pays légal* for creating an atmosphere in which love is unable to flourish.

References to the Occupation as a time deprived of love are dotted throughout Aragon's wartime poetry, and throughout Resistance poetry in general. In 'La nuit d'exil', Aragon refers to the fall of Paris as a time when 'la douceur d'aimer un soir a disparu' (*YE* 44). 'La nuit de juillet' is similarly set in 'un temps sans amour' (*DF* 53). The new France is one where hearts are closed by fear to love and *fraternité*: it is a country of 'jardins clos qui sont des coeurs murés' (*EEP* 139). In 'Chant français', Aragon wonders: 'Quel secret noir y nourrit les rumeurs / Que les longs soirs ne parlent plus d'amour' (*DF* 59).

Eluard clearly considers love to be as much under threat in France as physical life when he writes:

> On expose ton coeur aux coups
> Quand à ton corps on ose à peine
> En parler tant on lui en veut
> Quels sales ennemis tu as (*ARA; OC* I 1256)

In *La Huche à pain*, Luc Bérimont who, much like Borne, regrets 'le temps du beau plaisir' (p. 33) in France, describes the hardships suffered during the Occupation. Amongst these is the absence of love. With violence dominant in 'Le temps des bruits de fer' (p. 24), this is a loveless age when 'le pain dur a le goût des lèvres sans baisers' (p. 24). Tardieu, too, marks *le pays légal* with the stigma of denying love. In 'Petit matin' (*JP* 90), he speculates that both life and love are betrayed there. The wind, described as an accomplice of the Occupier, 'déchira les feuilles de l'amour' (*JP* 98). Hidden light and love comprise the Holy Grail sought by 'Les aventuriers du jour' (*JP* 106). Tardieu voices a familiar sentiment when he describes *le pays légal* as 'la nuit sans amour dans la glu de la haine' (*JP* 107).

The first alienating change in France was therefore the substitution of an atmosphere of isolation, violence and hatred for the ethic of love on which, as this chapter goes on to show, *le pays réel* depends.

(b) *Attentisme* in *le pays légal*

A further alienating change in France was the spirit of defeatism and *attentisme* that spread throughout *le pays légal*. The German Occupier and Vichy alike had reason to promulgate such a spirit: 'Un peuple petit, de tâcherons et de peureux' (Aragon; *DF* 12) could be more easily integrated into a New Europe or a New Order than one convinced of its vitality and heroism.

Reference is made in the poetry to the Occupation years as a time when, in the words of Emmanuel, 'le peuple se maudissant a renoncé / à la douceur et à l'été de son courage' (*JC* 91). Eluard's portrayal of France in 1942 describes a land where everything tends towards sterility and stagnation. It is a defeated land of neither

passion nor glory: 'un pays gris, sans passions, timide' (*LO* II; *OC* I 1092). In 'Tuer', Eluard describes Paris being overcome by a stagnant, paralysing peace which is clearly that of the Armistice. The city, once pulsating with life, is now without vigour, its people stripped of their vitality:

> Il tombe cette nuit
> Une étrange paix sur Paris
> Une paix d'yeux aveugles
> De rêves sans couleur
> Qui se cognent aux murs
> Une paix de bras inutiles
> De fronts vaincus (*ARA; OC* I 1255)

Emmanuel witnesses a similar change when he suggests that the strength and passion of France's towns has been replaced by sterility and old age:

> tes villes fortes et terribles et candides
> qui, nues, faisaient sans fin l'amour avec le ciel,
> leur ventre s'est-il donc ridé, éteint leur sexe
> sont-elles devenues ces vieilles édentées? (*LGP* 94)

For Emmanuel, the people of France seem to have lost their will to live and their vitality. He condemns such lassitude in the name of France's dead and in the name of the values for which they stood (*LGP* 97).

Masson, too, appeals strongly against the spirit of *attentisme* in France. He sees the enemies of *le pays réel* as not just the Nazi occupiers or the Vichy authorities, but as those indifferents, like the Church, who refuse to listen to France's plea for help, and who stifle the true *patrie* in their apathy.[32] He writes: 'France crie ce cri de brûlée / étouffée sous les bâillons' (*DM* 68). He criticises the church for failing to take a positive stand against Nazism and for helping in this way to engender *attentisme* within France:

> Quand le Crime vient chevauchant jusqu'aux autels piaffer dans la glaise innommable des vaincus
> Et qu'il leur faudrait, les mains sur les saintes reliques, hurler leurs cathédrales comme un cri à démanteler l'azur
> - ils disent Paix. Et c'est la paix à soulever l'encens la paix traînant ses fusillés, l'immonde fornication de l'ombre avec la peur jusque sous les reins des morts! (*DM* 66)

Cayrol is no less outraged by the *attentisme* inherent in France's 'false' peace with Germany. In 'Requiescat in pace', he expresses the lack of heroism and moral fibre in this peace, using images of flaccidity and stagnation to denote it, and asking:

Paix fainéante, mains si molles
patience comme un fruit trop mûr
qui portera ta blessure
quand tu hausses les épaules? (*EN* 20)

For Resistance poets, the lassitude and defeatism associated with *attentisme* were unacceptable features of *le pays légal*. As well as stifling the vitality of the French *patrie*, they were considered to have a profoundly damaging effect on each and all of its citizens. This is an important point which is returned to at the beginning of Chapter III.

(c) A lost voice

Both of the changes noted above are associated in some way with the idea that the new France is a silent country. The denial of love in *le pays légal* denies communication between people. *Attentisme* signifies an unwillingness to speak out. *Le pays légal* is often described as a country cocooned in unnatural silence. References to a strange silence mark once more the poets' strong sense of isolation within the new France.

In 'Réfugiés', Emmanuel describes the *exode* and France's terrible disarray in the peace that followed. The new *patrie* that emerged from the defeat is characterised and stigmatised by a desolate silence:

maintenant et à jamais il faut nous taire
nous taire et devenir terre muette, terre
de désolation sans plainte et sans appel
car ce mutisme est notre chaleur et notre ciel
notre patrie! (*JC* 33)

In Emmanuel's eyes, France is disfigured by such silence. It is described as a debilitating, lifeless thing, accompanied by fear and images of paralysis:

Sommes nous enneigés vivants sous le silence
en quelle Cimmérie immense de terreur?
la bouche ouverte en un cri d'ombre interminable
les lèvres collées à l'abîme par le gel (*LGP* 98)

Tardieu, too, evokes a time of unnatural silence in France, and relates the silence to fear:

Parle un bâillon sur la bouche
Que la main étrangle le coeur
Eteins éteins dans la nuit
le chant des coqs de l'aurore (*JP* 90)

The same silence is noted by Cayrol, who writes: 'Voici que tout se tait à l'orée du silence' (*EN* 13). Cayrol's spiritual despair and sense of alienation result, in part, from the silence that has descended on France:

J'appartiens au silence
à l'ombre de ma voix
aux murs nus de la Foi
au pain dur de la France (*EN* 9)

Seghers's sense of loss and disorientation is similarly conveyed through references to a strange, pervasive silence in France. He evokes a familiar sense of estrangement in 'Comme ...', where a feeling of loss is fed by such images of silence as 'une usine sans son bruit' or 'un marché sans veau qui meugle' (*DP* 47). In 'Paris se libère', the Occupation is described as a time wasted in silence:

Les soeurs, les mères, les enfants
Du temps perdu qui vivaient dans
Le grand silence de la ville
Avec leur misère au cachot (*DP* 25)

Jean Lescure uses similar terminology to describe the Occupation:

(...) l'immobile saison
sème ces statues noires
et secrète le miel bourdonnant du silence
Et les vallées n'ont plus de voix (...)[33]

Again, silence is linked with a sense of isolation when Lescure writes: 'la journée s'ouvre aujourd'hui / sur ce silence et sur la plaine dépeuplée'.[34]

For many Resistance poets, the true French *patrie* was a lost ideal that cried out for expression within the silence of *le pays légal*. Aragon outlines the need to give voice to France in 'Pour un chant national':

Il faut une langue à la terre
Des lèvres aux murs aux pavés
Parlez parlez vous qui savez
Spécialistes du mystère
Le sang refuse de se taire (*YE* 77)

Expressing *le pays réel* was of extreme importance at a time when this true *patrie* was outlawed from France.

In *La Poésie, la Résistance,* Gaucheron transports the reader back to the Occupation years, when 'La patrie n'existe plus que virtuellement, comme on dit d'une image qu'elle est virtuelle, dans les esprits et dans les coeurs, dans le courage de ceux qui ne démissionnent pas' (p. 120). Given that the *patrie* (*le pays réel*) existed only virtually then, *like* an image, there was no better way for Resistance poets to defend it than to voice it in their work *as* an image - or, as we shall see, as a complex group of images.

Some poems refer directly to the fact that *le pays réel* exists only as language. For example, Aragon recreates the 'real' Paris in his words in 'Le paysan de Paris chante', where he writes of 'Mon Paris qu'on ne peut tout à fait m'avoir pris / Pas plus qu'on ne peut prendre à des lèvres leur cri' (*EEP* 112). In 'Au devant de la vie', Louis Parrot indicates that the 'real' France is present only in the act of naming:

> La France cachée dans votre ombre [sc. the shadow of the Collaboration]
> N'est plus qu'un nom n'est plus qu'un chant
> Douloureux qu'on chante en pleurant
> Un berceau creusé de vos ongles.[35]

In Borne's 'Mélopée', the Hungarian exile says:

> il ne me reste rien de mon pays que ma voix
> cette langue qui tient les choses si serrés
> qu'en chantant je sens monter de moi l'espace perdu (*Co* 34)

At this point, it is useful to begin to consider both *le pays réel* and *le pays légal* as 'myths' of the French *patrie*. Before going on to examine the poets' images of *le pays réel* in terms of a counter-myth to images of *le pays légal*, a precise definition of the word 'myth' as it is used here is essential.

III MYTH

1. SOME CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS

The problem with employing the word 'myth' is that it has almost as many meanings as it has users. As John White points out in *Mythology in the Modern Novel* (a work that is exemplary in its own avoidance of terminological confusion): 'While elasticity can sometimes be a definite asset, in the case of words which possess

such different associations as "myth" can have in various contexts, it at times becomes the critic's worst enemy' (p. 32).

Before defining the word as it is used in this present chapter, it is important to draw attention to the elasticity of the term as it is used even in the narrow context of Resistance poetry. The word 'myth' figures most frequently in the wartime polemical writings of Emmanuel and Aragon. A brief description of how the word is used by these two poets and by the poet/critic Benjamin Péret will demonstrate the need to distinguish and delineate certain different categories or types of myth.

Emmanuel uses the word 'myth' to refer to a concept of man. In 'L'Homme et le poète', for example, he writes that 'le mythe du monde moderne (...) c'est l'autophagie' (p. 86). He argues that there is an urgent need to counteract this myth: 'A ce mythe il faut en opposer d'autres, qui donnent à l'homme une nouvelle santé' (p. 86). The type of myth which Emmanuel refers to here and in 'L'Utilisation des mythes' can best be classified as an ontological myth, concerned, as it is, with the nature of man's being. Clearly, any concept of man has an inevitable effect on the country in which it becomes prevalent: for this reason, the present chapter would be incomplete without the following one, which examines in detail the concept of man that is proposed in Resistance poetry. Yet while ontological myths such as those described by Emmanuel are of overall relevance to the notion of the French *patrie*, this category of myth figures more naturally in Chapter III.

What Aragon means by 'myth' has a more direct bearing here - particularly since one of the meanings he attributes to the word is at variance with the meaning I myself have given it throughout this chapter.

In 'De l'exactitude historique en poésie', Aragon refers to the strange political fortune of myths during the Third Reich, when 'Des hommes qui brûlaient les livres mais ne dédaignaient pas de poser aux philosophes se sont emparés d'eux pour en faire des leviers politiques, des trompe-l'oeil du peuple, des feux de naufrageurs pour les nations' (*EEP* 93). He refers to 'le mensonge des mythes hitlériens' used 'pour la domination de l'homme par la brute' (*EEP* 94), and reveals that the underlying aim of his earlier essay, 'La Leçon de Ribérac', was to oppose Nazi 'mythes de la race' with

what he calls 'les images de la Nation' (*EEP* 95). In each of these cases, Aragon uses the word 'myth' dismissively, to signify deception or imposture. To lay emphasis on the deceptive nature of what is meant here by the word, the category of myth in which Aragon places the Nazi myth of race can be qualified as a delusory myth.

Aragon contrasts such delusory myths with 'les images de la Nation'. (It is important to bear in mind that Aragon is using the word 'Nation' here in its Revolutionary sense.) Although he refers to 'images' rather than 'myths' of the nation, the idea of myth (or counter-myth) is nonetheless implied. Aragon's essay is dotted with references to a different type or category of myth. He describes as 'mythical' the characters and landmarks of French history and legend that he had revived in 'La Leçon de Ribérac'. He goes on to say that these are '"mythiques" au sens initial français du mot, qui ne préjuge pas de l'emploi nazi des mythes' (*EEP* 95).

This conflicting sense of the word 'mythical' is defined earlier on in the article. Aragon describes as 'mythical' Alfred de Musset's factually inaccurate representation of Venice in the first poem of *Premières poésies*. Having never been to Venice, the young Musset opened his poem with the lines: 'Dans Venise la rouge, / Pas un cheval qui bouge.' Aragon regrets that for the sake of documentary accuracy, 'cheval' was later changed to 'bateau'. He argues that the Venice that Musset had initially succeeded in depicting was 'une ville mythique, une raison de rêver' (*EEP* 91-2), and writes that 'la valeur mythique de Venise (...) tient aux désirs, aux privations, aux révoltes d'un étudiant de dix-neuf ans, à Paris en 1829' (*EEP* 93). He goes on to describe myths explicitly as 'ces honnêtes ressorts du théâtre intellectuel que porte en lui tout rêveur' (*EEP* 93). In the sense in which Aragon uses it here, 'myth' has two defining characteristics. It is fictional, in so far as it runs contrary to historical accuracy, and it is aspirational: it gives and it embodies 'une raison de rêver'. In claiming, as we have seen, that this sense of the word is specifically French, Aragon highlights that the myths or images of the French nation with which he proposes to combat delusory myths of race can be defined similarly as fictional and aspirational.

There was every good reason for Aragon to emphasise the fictional or historically inexact quality of his own myths of the French nation. As far as he was concerned,

historical 'truth' was monopolised during the Occupation by delusory Nazi and Vichy myths: the backbone of political reality in France at the time. While bearing this in mind, it seems to me tautological to create a separate category of myth and call it fictional. My own broad definition of myth, regardless of category, stresses that myth is a linguistic phenomenon: following this definition, all myths are fictions, including the Nazi myth of race. It is, on the other hand, extremely useful to maintain the idea that the myth of *patrie* in Resistance poetry is aspirational, and to set it in a category of that name.

In *Le Déshonneur des poètes*, Péret criticises Resistance poets for having subjected their work to the cause of nationalism in France, and for having attempted thus to revive 'un mythe agonisant' (p. 80). Péret refers to the principles of Christianity and nationalism that were widespread in 1945 as 'anciens mythes' (p. 79). He qualifies the type of nationalism expressed in Resistance poetry as a degenerate, *ersatz* myth (p. 78), designed to 'provoquer une exaltation factice dans la masse' (p. 80). A myth proper, in Péret's usage, is the creative expression of a popular aspiration.[36] Formerly, mystics and revolutionaries had voiced a popular urge: they were 'le produit d'une exaltation collective réelle et profonde que traduisaient leurs paroles' (p. 80) who expressed 'la pensée et l'espoir de tout un peuple imbu du même mythe ou animé du même élan' (p. 80). The concept of *patrie* voiced in Resistance poetry fails, in Péret's mind, to qualify as myth.

It is clearly important to distinguish between categories of myth. It is also important to point out that the category into which a given myth is placed depends entirely on the point of view of the person who does the placing, and that not everyone will agree that a given phenomenon qualifies as a myth in the first place. So, for example, Péret does not recognise as myth the concept of *patrie* which Aragon clearly qualifies as an aspiration myth. In Aragon's mind, the myth of race was a delusory myth, yet for those dedicated to the Nazi cause it was doubtless an aspiration myth, reflecting the desire of an entire people to rid itself of racial impurity. From the Nazi point of view, the myth of race entered simultaneously the category of ontological myth. In other words, a particular myth can belong to more than one category of

myth; again, this is completely dependent on the perspective of the individual who decides to cast the types.

I myself have chosen to categorise both the Resistance myth of *le pays réel* and the Collaboration myth of *le pays légal* as aspiration myths. By 'aspiration myth' I mean the expression of an alleged popular aspiration, tending towards a future goal. The myths of *le pays réel* and *le pays légal* are both aspiration myths in so far as through them, the respective myth-makers attempted to voice the collective aspirations of the French people, and to encourage that people to realise, through action, the ideal, virtual *patrie* thus expressed. In 'Poésie à hauteur d'homme', Seghers claims that the poet is the voice of collective aspirations: 'Il chante et c'est son pays qui chante. (...) Il est, le poète, la voix d'un peuple' (p. 3). Pétain, too, claimed to speak for the French people and their wishes. *Le pays réel* and *le pays légal* are conflicting aspiration myths because they present conflicting sets of alleged aspirations.

The word 'myth' on its own requires a looser formulation, for it covers a number of different areas. While those who use the word rarely use it to mean the same thing, the writers I have looked at from a number of disciplines are all agreed that myth is a linguistic phenomenonon, realised only in language.[37] To this it should be added that any particular myth directly or indirectly affects the community in which it is voiced. The general definition proposed, then, is that myth is a verbal act with moral implications for the community in which it pertains.

This definition is admittedly nebulous. Every verbal act has moral implications for the community in which it is uttered and every verbal act could therefore be construed as myth. Some comments on myth made by Paul Valéry emphasise the all-embracing nature of such a definition. Valéry defines myth thus: '*Mythe* est le nom de tout ce qui n'existe et ne subsiste qu'ayant la parole pour cause.'[38] Consequently, he writes:

> Il y a tant de mythes en nous et si familiers qu'il est presque impossible de séparer nettement de notre esprit quelque chose qui n'en soit point. (...) Songez que demain est un mythe, que l'univers en est un; que le nombre, que l'amour, que le réel comme l'infini, que la justice, le peuple, la poésie ... la terre elle-même sont mythes![39]

What Valéry points to here is a metaphysical problem, concerning the relation of language to the outside world. At the same time, his comments underline the fact that if 'myth' is, of necessity, given such a wide definition, then it can hardly serve as a useful analytic tool.

In order to make it serve as such, I would suggest that it is necessary always to use it in conjunction with other words, which indicate the type of myth to which reference is being made. Hence the use of the term 'aspiration myth' throughout this present chapter.

2. TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE ASPIRATION MYTH OF *PATRIE*

According to some Resistance poets, one of the harmful effects of the instability caused by the defeat and the *exode* was to leave the French people open to the temptation of a regime that proposed its own aspiration myths and ideology. Such, as we have already seen in part, was the nature of the Vichy regime. Even more dangerous was the idea that a people deprived of its own identity should adopt the powerful aspiration myths that bolstered the Nazi regime. The poets were aware that their Nazi occupiers were involved in a pernicious myth-making. Most of them were also aware that a disorientated *patrie,* full of what Aragon describes as 'têtes d'oiseaux qui tournent à tout vent' (*YE* 51), was in urgent need of ideals around which to rally.

In *La Résistance et ses poètes,* Seghers quotes Patrice de la Tour de Pin on the necessity of creating legends for a country: 'Tous les pays qui n'ont plus de légendes / Seront condamnés à mourir de froid' (Vol. I, p. 21). Seghers believed that the dearth of such legends in post-Armistice France created a vacuum that could well have been filled by the Nazi mystique. He remembers the appeal that the Third Reich had had for certain French people before the war:

> le III[e] Reich fascine certains Français qui admirent sans réserve les défilés aux flambeaux et rêvent de devenir héros et hérauts de "l'Ordre Nouveau". Je lis, ici et là, d'étranges articles dans la presse, Wagner, les contre-jours, la féerie guerrière, les beaux uniformes, la force. Un nouveau romantisme politique naît en faveur de l'Allemagne. (Vol. I, p. 23)

During the war, in the poem 'Quarante-trois', he writes that 'Tout le monde attendait une étoile nouvelle' (*TM* 38). He suggests that the only vision of France's future on offer at the time was seriously flawed: 'On cardait l'avenir, la laine des années / Sur de mauvais chardons, les fils cassaient, rien n'allait bien' (*TM* 38). The inadequacy of the vision was matched by the inadequacy of the language in which it was voiced: the future was being woven 'Sur le métier des mots qui ne voulaient rien dire' (*TM* 38).

Aragon's *Le Musée Grévin* is a good example of his determination to combat what he saw as the delusory myth of race that was spread by Nazism. In the first part of *Le Musée Grévin*, there is a description of the process of myth-making embarked on by the Occupiers. The invaders are referred to as myth-makers who can 'roucouler désormais la romance' and 'attester l'univers que leur grand coeur se fend' (p. 7). Their aspiration myths are alien to France - as distinctive a mark of their foreign presence as the military invasion. Native French myths have been replaced 'Par des dieux étrangers' (p. 8). The imposition of foreign myths, notably that of race, is as vital and harmful a part of the Nazi Occupation as the physical terror and hardship that the French were forced to endure. Aragon clearly writes here as a collective voice:

> Vous m'avez renversé quand loisir vous en vint;
> Vous avez répandu mon sang comme le vin ...
> Fantômes, fantômes, fantômes!
> Et vous avez livré le grain de mes silos;
> Et dispersé mon peuple et divisé son lot;
> Fantômes, fantômes, fantômes!
> Oublierais-je la beauté des femmes flétrie?
> Le masque atroce mis à la mère Patrie?
> Fantômes, fantômes, fantômes!
> Et l'angoisse des Juifs sous le ciel étouffant?
> Et leurs petits enfants pareils à mes enfants?
> Fantômes, fantômes, fantômes!
> Vous avez dissipé ce que j'aime en fumée
> Et mêlé mes drapeaux à des drapeaux gammés. (p. 12)

It was a matter of some urgency, then, for France to rid itself of these false crusaders or false prophets: 'Il faut bien que la terre ardente se délivre / Des faux Croisés faiseurs de fantasmagories!' (p. 9).

In the fourth section of the poem, Aragon denounces the unhealthy mysticism underlying Nazism by drawing parallels between Nazi myth-making and black magic

rituals:

> Pythagore, à moi, Belphégore!
> Traçons le cercle des devins!
> Je bois l'encre et je lis le vin ...
> Est-ce la blanche mandrapore
> Ou la truffe du Périgord?
> Le svastika me rend divin! (p. 16)

Such craving for mystical, 'divine' power is sated by the Nazi cult of force and repression, which enables the regime to hold an entire people in slavery and to impose its delusory myths of blood and race. In words that are again voiced by the Occupier:

> Esclaves, vous vivrez selon
> Le sort fixé par mes augures!
> Il est écrit dans leur figures
> Que les bruns soient les chiens des blonds
> J'instaure le nouveau jeu de l'Oye (p. 17)

Aragon was not content simply to expose the mechanics of Nazi myth-making. He and other poets set themselves the task of counteracting alien Nazi and Vichy aspiration myths with their own: *le pays réel.*

IV *LE PAYS REEL*

1. IMAGES OF A HEROIC *PATRIE*

One of the illusions about France which Resistance poets sought to dispel was that the country had earned its defeat and was therefore best represented by images of submission and humiliation. Vichy, for example, used the figure of Vercingétorix as its symbolic forerunner, and so insisted on the dignity of surrender as an adequate image of the *patrie*. Resistance poets conscientiously refused such a notion of France and posited, in its place, an ideal *patrie* represented by images of heroism and combat.

In *La Resistance et ses poètes,* Seghers writes of the spirit of submission that was drummed into French people after the Armistice. This encouraged them to accept the natural superiority of their conquerors and to accept 'la paix à tout prix, la paix narcotique, la paix comme un abandon suicidaire' (Vol. I, p. 57). He claims that in order to resist such determined lethargy, it was essential at the time to find means to formulate and to spur people's will to make their *patrie* survive:

> Ce n'est pas dans l'inaction, dans la résignation léthargique que le pays défendra sa vie, sa dignité, ses structures. En lui-même, chaque homme ressent un sursaut personnel. Des armes, des combats, certes, mais il est d'abord nécessaire de préparer le terrain. C'est-à-dire de s'opposer à la perversion des esprits, à la corruption de l'âme, à la conquête des volontés. Survivre, ce sera d'abord s'accrocher à tout ce qui peut alimenter la volonté de survie. (Vol. I, p. 58)

One of the means used to spur the French people's 'will to survive' was to present post-Armistice France as a country still fired with heroism and still following in the tradition of heroism that had defined France over the centuries.

Masson's 'Prière pour la France', for example, appeals against the defeatism that invested *le pays légal.* In its place, Masson posits the memory of a fighting France with a strong tradition of combat against oppression:

> Où est ma race aux reins d'émeute
> qui flamboie lorsque Paris ceint la couronne de pavés?
> Est-ce ces corps chavirés
> ce troupeau dont les entrailles battent la honte et l'oubli? (*DM* 68)

Rather than in the present of humiliation and defeat, *le pays réel* is to be found in the catacombs of France, where 'le vrai sang / va s'écailler de révolte et d'espoir' (*DM* 68).[40]

Aragon was largely responsible for codifying the cult of heroism in Resistance poetry. In the prose text that opens *La Diane française,* Aragon makes clear his belief that the Armistice and the Collaboration that had transformed France into a submissive state resulted from a cynical view of the *patrie* as a material concern (p. 10). For Aragon, the *patrie* is obviously more than just a political and financial concern. It is a 'conscience sourde' (p. 10) that goes beyond and sometimes has to flout material interests. Indeed, it is best expressed in the disparity between immediate political expediency - in this case, the necessity of submission - and spontaneous, spirited, irrational actions that defy political and material logic. The acts of heroism celebrated by Aragon are the same spirited, illogical actions that reveal the true face of *le pays réel.* Aragon's portrait of Vercingétorix, for example, is very different from that drawn by Vichy. He emphasises that when forced to surrender before Caesar, the Gallic chieftain threw down his sword and buckle with a typical 'folie à nous du beau

geste' (p. 11). Through his 'folie du beau geste', Vercingétorix managed to keep intact a noble image of the *patrie* that was lost in the ignominy of Vichy's 'logical' collaboration.[41]

Aragon follows this with further examples of legendary, heroic exploits enacted throughout France's past. Through his descriptions of acts of heroism that are 'toujours miraculeusement disproportionnés au paladin sorti des fourrés en pleine injustice' (p. 12), there emerges an image of his ideal *patrie*: 'Et ici commence mon pays / Mon pays, mon pays, mon pays ...' (p. 12). Through repetition, Aragon stresses the individualism of this myth of the French *patrie*. This is *his* country: the aspiration myth he is helping to create as an alternative to a *patrie* of submission and *attentisme*. Elsewhere, Aragon justifies his use of 'irrelevant' legendary figures such as Tristan and Yseult, Lancelot, Roland, Perceval and Renaud: 'en eux il nous appartient de nous reconnaître, de reconnaître le courage et les hauts faits de la France et de son peuple, d'éclairer ces images anciennes de la réalité moderne de l'héroïsme français' (*EEP* 95).

Before this, in 'La Leçon de Ribérac', Aragon had looked back to a proliferation of heroes in medieval French literature and chosen Chrétien de Troye's Perceval as 'l'incarnation la plus haute du français' (*YE* 136). He asks: 'tout Français conscient de l'histoire de son pays ne reconnaîtra-t-il pas ses héros préfigurés en Perceval, la France même préfigurée en Perceval?' (*YE* 136). For him, Perceval's heroism is exemplary for the past, the present and the future of France. The lesson to be learned by present-day France was clear: the heroic, mythical France of medieval French literature provided a truer image of *le pays réel* than the spirit of submission presented in the work of collaborationist writers. Aragon opposes accounts of heroes such as Perceval with the defeatism and *attentisme* displayed in the work of writers such as Giono or Drieu la Rochelle. 'Vivre à plat ventre' - a phrase he attributes to Giono - is contrasted with Chrétien de Troyes's 'Se assez miaux morir ne vuel / A enor, que a honte vivre' (*YE* 138). Aragon encourages other poets to recognize the richness of France's medieval literature, with its creation of a heroic ideal of France. He urges them to prepare a new era of similar heroism:

> Puissent les poètes français d'aujourd'hui (...) se préparer pour les jours où surgira le nouveau Chevalier Vermeil. Alors (...) ce sera la véritable *aube* française, qui ne connaît pas les frontières et se lèvera si haut qu'on la verra du bout du monde. (*YE* 139)

Aragon was manifestly trying to rearouse in the French people an ancient heroic impulse. He wished to rekindle what he calls 'l'enivrement de la grandeur qui portait aux exploits la jeunesse insoumise, la jeunesse éternellement insoumise' (*DF* 11). His aim was to restore people's allegiance to the *patrie* by presenting an ideal mythical France, compounded of legendary, heroic exploits, both past and present.

The presentation of a heroic, combative past in the work of Aragon and others is dealt with in the following section of this chapter, which looks specifically at the poets' representations of France's past. These legends of the past go hand in hand with the birth of the new legends and romances in post-Armistice France. The new aspiration myths of the Resistance, like the contemporary use of old legends, help combat the idea that the French were a little people, cowering, with reason, beneath the shame of their nationality. In Aragon's words again:

> Vous croyiez être un peuple petit, de tâcherons et de peureux, on vous l'avait tant dit que vous le répétiez. On vit donc ressurgir les géants oubliés. Dans les gares, où veillaient des sentinelles étrangères, passaient des jeunes gens avec des havresacs et des souliers ferrés. (*DF* 12)

In Aragon's poetry, *le pays réel* is often associated with these outlaws of Vichy France. In 'Chanson du Franc-Tireur', the Resister/narrator speaks as the guardian of a permanent, true France: 'Qu'importe qu'ils te travestissent / Tu restes la même pour nous' (*DF* 44). Similarly, in 'Gloire', 'Les enfants couleur de patrie' are 'Ceux qui n'ont pas voulu se rendre / Ceux qui n'ont pas voulu se vendre' (*DF* 73). France is made recognizable again as *le pays réel* is glimpsed through the boldness of the young 'maquisards'. Aragon writes:

> France reprends ton droit d'aînesse
> Le monde enfin te reconnaisse
> A l'audace de tes enfants
> Et légendaire tu renaisses
> France entre les bras triomphants
> De ta jeunesse (*DF* 74)

In *Brocéliande,* Aragon embarks on the same process of mythicising the heroes of the *maquis*, through whom 'La gloire n'eut jamais autant de prétendants' (p. 177). He aligns the Resisters with all those whose martyrology helped construct a glorious image of France. They are

> Pareils à ceux jadis à qui l'on fit des temples
> Pareils à ceux naguère aux monuments inscrits
> Eux qui nourris de toi sont morts à ton exemple
>
> Et n'ont rien regretté le jour qu'ils ont péri
> Puisqu'ils dirent ton nom sous la grêle des balles
> Préférant de mourir que vive la patrie (p. 178)

Just as the everyday acts of these 'ouvriers de la patrie' work against the Collaboration, so the poets' mythicisation of their acts is itself a work of combat. In Aragon's words again: 'C'est le temps des héros qui renaît au Vercors / Les plus simples des mots font le bruit des épées' (*DF* 79). Reports of Resisters' heroism helped form a composite image of an ideal France - a 'sol semé de héros' (*MG* 29) where 'Hercule était devenu le Français moyen' (*DF* 12-13). This, Aragon argues, was a truer image of the French *patrie* than that pleaded by Collaboration propagandists:

> l'avenir doit savoir qu'en niant la réalité passagère de la défaite et de la honte, nous étions des milliers et des milliers en France qui plaidions pour l'éternelle réalité française. Qui, malgré l'apparente raison de ceux qui nous opposaient l'intérêt immédiat et la servilité qui mange, n'avons jamais cessé de revendiquer cette folie française, dont on riait en ce temps-là, cette générosité sans rapport avec l'exactitude historique qui a toujours jeté les Français aux grandes causes. (*EEP* 97-8)

Two points should be made in conclusion here. First, heroism itself is stressed as a salient feature of *le pays réel,* because this counters the humiliating and uninspiring concept of the French as a submissive people. It is, however, the nature of the heroism celebrated that counts towards a proper understanding of 'l'éternelle réalité française' for which Resisters fought. Collaborators, too, had their exemplary heroes, as outlined in the section that follows. Yet the *patrie* that they exemplified was clearly at odds with the *patrie* voiced and fought for by heroes of the Resistance. This becomes clear further on, when we examine the uses made by Resister and Collaborator alike of heroic figures such as Jeanne d'Arc and Charles Peguy. In *The*

Youth of Vichy France, W.D. Halls notes 'a sprinkling of military warriors' (p. 167) amongst the heroes chosen as rallying cries of the Collaboration. This, he says, betokens a vogue for military valour in Vichy France. The Atlantis movement, aimed specifically at the French youth, tried to revive a medieval ideal of chivalry. This chivalric ideal, while French in origin, was assimilated to the Teutonic ideal of virility and valour that bolstered the Nazi regime. When, on the other hand, Aragon evokes the mythical medieval hero, Perceval, he makes it clear that Perceval's exemplary heroism lies not so much in his military valour as in the fact that he engendered a passion for the ideals of justice and truth. This serves to emphasise a point that will be returned to often in this chapter: the *patrie* willed and created by Resistance poets, and exemplified by the heroes they extolled, was a spiritual land, composed of the humanitarian values of freedom, justice and *fraternité.*

The final concluding point arises from Aragon's emphasis on 'cette folie française (...) cette générosité sans rapport avec l'exactitude historique qui a toujours jeté les Français aux grandes causes' (*EEP* 98). Aragon repeatedly rejects the logic and political expediency of France's collaboration with Germany. He finds a more honest image of his *patrie* in acts of heroism that have little regard for 'l'intérêt immédiat' or 'l'exactitude historique'. This underlines an essential aspect of the Resistance experience, and an important facet of the Resisters' concept of *patrie.* With the odds stacked heavily in favour of collaboration, a wild leap of faith was needed by those who opted to fight for a different type of *patrie.* Emmanuel, for example, asks if 'notre plus folle espérance / soit la seule mémoire assurée / qui de toi nous demeure ô France?' (*Can* 32). For Emmanuel, the *patrie* is 'notre plus folle espérance'; for Seghers it is a 'volonté de survie'; for Aragon it is a 'folie' or a 'générosité sans rapport avec l'exactitude historique'. All three stress the volitional nature of the Resisters' *patrie*: it was something to be willed, something to be hoped for and something to be imagined, against all the odds. Hence the recurrence of the dream motif in Resistance poetry. Eluard's 'Les Armes de la douleur' is a good example of this. It celebrates the heroism of Resisters whose dreams enable them to leave *le pays légal* and realise a 'true', marvellous and ideal *patrie:*

Par mille rêves humains
Par mille voies de nature
Ils sortent de leur pays
Et leur pays entre en eux
De l'air passe dans leur sang
Leurs pays peut devenir
Le vrai pays des merveilles
Le pays de l'innocence (*ARA; OC* I 1228)[42]

Not everyone, of course, had this will, these hopes or these dreams. It was, in part, up to Resistance poets to fuel the French people's 'volonté de survie' by presenting images of France as a fit country for heroes to live in. The following section looks at how France's past was presented as one of the motivators of Resistance. It examines in further detail the nature of the Resisters' aspiration myth of *patrie* as it is revealed through a selective historical heritage.

2. A HISTORICAL HERITAGE

After the Armistice, both Collaborators and Resisters felt a need to forge some historical continuity between the old France and the new. Both camps looked to the history of France for their heroes and ideological antecedents. Before examining the image of *le pays réel* that can be gleaned through the Resisters' chosen ancestry, it will be useful to look, briefly, at how Vichy revived the past, and what image of France was told in their presentation of France's history.

Soon after taking control of unoccupied France, the Vichy government embarked on a process of what W.D. Halls terms 'cultural revisionism' (p. 216). They considered French history to be in most need of revision. Serge Jeanneret, a leading light of the 'Cercle Fustel de Coulanges', claimed that under the Third Republic, the preoccupation of history teaching had been to blacken the monarchy and extol political institutions and ideologies arising from the 1789 Revolution. As a reaction against the old Republican bias, Vichy lobbied for a different presentation of the past which would blacken Republicanism and extol the virtues of a feudal society. The Collaboration's harsh attacks on the Republic have already been noted. Its emphasis on feudalism is best seen in Vichy's 'retour à la terre' policy, examined further on.

Pétain was particularly interested in the revival of national pride through a reformed French history. In a speech made in Metz in 1938, he had already pleaded for a more 'national' kind of history, arguing that young conscripts were ignorant of France's past glories. In 1941, he argued that the new *patrie* would depend on an assimilation of various elements selected from France's past:

> La révolution nationale (...) marque la résolution ardente de rassembler tous les éléments du passé et du présent qui sont sains et de bonne volonté, pour faire un Etat fort, de recomposer l'âme nationale, dissoute par la discorde des partis, et de lui rendre confiance aiguë et lucide des grandes générations privilégiées de notre histoire (...) (*Paroles aux français*, p. 129)

Vichy's choice of historical precedents that were 'sains et de bonne volonté' constructed an image of the French *patrie* which was radically different from that given in Resistance writing.

'Healthy' extracts from France's past were used to justify collaboration with Germany. Michèle Cotta points out that a common feature of the Vichy regime was to present collaboration not as the subordination of a defeated country to the victor, but as an association of equals. One facet of this presentation was the emphasis given to a continuation of selected customs and institutions that were specifically French. In order to show that the Collaboration slotted easily into a French tradition, journalists and politicians invoked the names of national heroes such as Charlemagne, Jeanne d'Arc and Vercingétorix.[43]

Joan of Arc was presented by the collaborationist press as the hero of Vichyism. She exemplified the same native virtues of simplicity, purity and honour as Vichy honoured so highly in the French peasantry. In her praise, Alphonse de Châteaubriant writes: 'Qu'y avait-il dans l'intelligence de Jeanne, elle qui ne savait ni lire ni écrire?'.[44] In *Je suis partout,* Claude Maubourguet offers her simplicity as an example: 'Nous devons nous efforcer de remettre en honneur les vertus de Jeanne d'Arc. Les hommes vraiment forts sont des hommes simples' (30 mai 1942, p. 6). Above all, Joan was used as an historical justification for Vichy's anglophobia. She was remembered primarily for having kicked the English out of France: 'Jeanne d'Arc âme de la Patrie et de l'Unité Française reste pour nous l'héroïne qui bouta les Anglais

hors de France."[45] A section of her trial was reproduced to support this:

> Interrogée si Dieu hait les Anglais:
> "De l'amour ou de la haine que Dieu porte aux Anglais, ne sais rien, mais sais bien qu'ils seront boutés hors de France, excepté ceux qui y mourront, et que Dieu enverra victoire aux Français, et contre les Anglais."[46]

Through the figure of Joan, French patriotism was firmly aligned with anti-English sentiments:

> Grâce à cette jeune inspirée, le sens moderne de la patrie prend naissance et racine dans les couches profondes du peuple; c'est comme l'éclatement d'un printemps national : une France nouvelle suscitée et ressuscitée par la jeunesse ardente et la simple pureté d'une bergère secoue le joug des Anglais, prend conscience de ses destinées, réprouve enfin les trahisons et des divisions intérieures. (*Toute la vie,* 14 mai 1942, p. 2)

When Rouen was bombed by Allied planes in May 1944, yet more fuel was added to the Collaboration's version of the Joan of Arc legend. Witness the front page article of *La Gerbe,* on 18 May 1944:

> Le plus atroce dans le martyre de Jeanne ne fut peut-être pas alors la torture des flammes, dont les Anglais et des Français sans honneur allaient la faire la proie, mais d'apercevoir, du haut de son bûcher, Rouen marytrisé à son tour cinq siècles plus tard par les fils de ses bourreaux et, au delà, toute cette France, dont elle incarnait l'unité, de nouveau misérable, divisée et livrée à leurs incendies. (...) La haine des Anglais pour Jeanne, c'est leur haine pour la France.

By 1944, the Collaboration's interpretation of the legend had undergone a slight shift in emphasis: the natural, historical enemy of France was perfidious Albion along with her honourless French accomplices. The free French army and the Resistance were pronounced like-minded traitors to France through the legend of Joan of Arc.

As part of its campaign to revive national pride, Vichy tried also to commandeer the more recent figure of Charles Péguy. Having died in 1914 on the battlefield of the Marne, Péguy seemed ripe for development into a national hero. Vichy remembered Péguy as the poet of Joan of Arc, whose work extols the soil of France and its Catholic heritage. Much like Joan of Arc, Péguy became an ambivalent symbol, used by the Resistance as well as by Vichy.

Vichy's revision of French history helps to underline the conservatism, the chauvinism and the reactionary nature of the 'legitimate' brand of patriotism in France.

France's past as remembered by Resistance poets was substantially different.

In common with Vichy, poets looked to the past to heal the sense of rupture in post-Armistice France. Memories of France's past were used in the Occupation years as landmarks of a permanent national identity. Aragon posits that *le pays réel*, disguised by the trappings of collaboration, is preserved in his memory: 'Ma mémoire est la France et dispense la nuit' (*MG* 13). His aim is to construct an aspiration myth of France through memories of the past: 'Du Paradis perdu retrouver la mémoire / Pour renouer ma phrase avec sa mélodie!' (*MG* 25). Supervielle, exiled in South America, appeals to figures from France's past to reassure him of the continuing strength of his *patrie:*

> Visages anciens qui sortez des ténèbres,
> Lunes de nos désirs et de nos libertés
> Approchez-vous vivants au sortir de nos rêves
> Et dissipez ce bas brouillard ensanglanté. (*PFM* 14)

Emmanuel, too, considers it imperative that values from the past should be restated. Addressing his own ideal *patrie*, he asks:

> ... Qui saura dire
> avec des mots plus transparents que le matin
> ce qui fut ta justice et ta miséricorde
> ta tendresse et ta très suave pauvreté
> jadis, ô mon pays (*LGP* 96)

The sense of rupture between past and present was only increased by Vichy's revisionism. The values from the past that helped compose an image of *le pays réel* were deliberately overlooked by the Collaboration and by the official press. Aragon writes:

> Inutile aujourd'hui de lire le journal
> Vous n'y trouverez pas les mystères français
> (...)
> Les rêves de chez nous sont mis en quarantaine (*Br* 162)

Yet Aragon asserts that these dreams from the past are still harboured within the present, through his memory and his song:

> Mais le bel autrefois habite le présent
> (...)
> Ma mémoire est un chant sans appogiatures
> Un manège qui tourne avec ses chevaliers
> Et le refrain qu'il moud vient du cycle d'Arthur (*Br* 162)

The 'bel autrefois' that he and others remember in song is of a different order from that commemorated by Vichy. While Vichy's *patrie* was founded on memories of feudalism and the monarchy, Resisters were inspired by memories of the left-wing, Republican tradition of France. In answer to the rupture caused by the abolition of the Republic, Resisters called up a cult of republicanism. The defence of the Republic became a common rallying cry for Resisters, with the clandestine press referring constantly to popular struggles in France, such as the Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Dreyfus affair and the Popular Front. Poets had their part to play in the formation of this composite Resistance ideal.

The first principle of Republicanism was the fight for freedom against oppression. *Le pays réel* is remembered as having traditionally combated forces of oppression that came from within or from outside France.

Aragon puts the present suffering of France into an historical perspective by referring to previous cases of France being defeated and oppressed. In his poem, 'C', he harks back to a distant defeat, the memory of which bridges the gap between past and present and leads to the same sorrowful image of an abandoned *pays réel:*

> J'ai traversé les ponts de Cé
> C'est là que tout a commencé
> (...)
> O ma France, ô ma délaissée
> J'ai traversé les ponts de Cé[47] (*YE* 55)

Each century, according to Aragon, has its own dragon to fight against. In his words, 'A chaque siècle il suffit sa tarasque' (*EEP* 141). This brings to mind Marcenac's remark that the inhumanity he makes known in France in 1945 as 'le Géant d'Oradour', can carry and has carried other names, elsewhere and at other times (*CF* 16). Just as, for Marcenac, *le pays réel* is defined through its resistance to 'le Géant d'Oradour', so, for Aragon, the essence of France is contained in the repeated urge to put an end to suffering and oppression. In 'Lancelot', he writes:

> Souffrir n'a pas de fin si ce n'est la souffrance
> Qui s'engendre et se meurt comme un phénix navré
> Ses feux embraseront ce monde à réméré
> La cendre en gardera le parfum de la France (*YE* 92)

In Resistance poetry, *le pays réel* is often aligned with a combat against oppression. Its contemporary defenders follow a tradition of combat established throughout the history of revolutionary republicanism. There is a striking contrast between such an image of the French *patrie* and Vichy's attempt to rebuild France from a starting block of defeatism and collaboration.

For Emmanuel, the French people is ideally a 'Vieux peuple enluminé aux marges de la gloire', whose colours are traditionally revived by 'la colère et l'espoir' (*Can* 56). The call to arms in the poem, 'France d'abord', is validated as an essential part of France's historical heritage: 'C'est à nous de briser nos chaînes / A l'exemple de nos aïeux' (*Europe* 222). Evocations of Republicanism appear as obsessive metaphors in Resistance poetry. For Seghers, the young Resisters hiding out in the French countryside emulate the bravery of all those who fought to preserve the Republican tradition. In 'Chant funèbre pour de nouveaux héros', he relates their fight for freedom to Napoleon's stand at the Pont d'Arcole in 1796; they are 'Frères en liberté de leur frère d'Arcole', and in them can be found 'le sang clair de Bara' (*DP* 24).[48]

Similarly, Aragon makes sense of the deaths of innocent students by placing them in a line of heroes fighting for the *patrie:*

> Les fils de Strasbourg qui tombèrent
> N'auront pas vainement péri
> Si leur sang rouge refleurit
> Sur le chemin de la patrie
> Et s'y dresse un nouveau Kléber[49]
> ('Chanson de l'Université de Strasbourg', *DF* 62)

Those who died fighting for the Republic make up a major part of the vocabulary of Aragon's love-song to *le pays réel.* The final stanza of 'Plainte pour le grand descort de France' contains a barely-concealed reference to the Paris Communards and the 'Mur des Fédérés' where they fought their last stand:

> (...) le printemps pour moi murmurera toujours
> Les mots d'un autre Mai parmi les mots d'amour
> Je n'oublierai jamais pour ses fleurs la muraille
> Je n'oublierai jamais
> Les morts du mois de mai (*YE* 69)

Masson's chosen heritage is this same 'race aux reins d'émeute' (*DM* 68). Again, his memory of combat counteracts Vichy's adopted defeatism. In 'Les morts

terriens', Masson writes:

> Il n'y a qu'un peuple aux moignons de liberté; il garde le souvenir et il l'affûte contre la grande tristesse du pays de France et contre La grande humiliation et contre la grande misère. (*DM* 40)

Spurred by his recollection of those who died for freedom within France, he says:

> Il n'y a pas une France de battus : la France a des reins. Il n'y a pas une France de crevés. Il n'y a qu'une même famille, Vivants et morts (*DM* 40)

More distant figures, such as Vercingétorix and Joan of Arc, are also presented as popular heroes, consonant with the tradition of revolutionary patriotism and exemplifying the fighting spirit within *le pays réel*. Joan of Arc is one of the 'visages anciens' to whom Supervielle appeals for an untainted image of his *patrie:*

> Victorieuse, toi et te mêlant à nous,
> Insensible au bûcher qui jusqu'ici rayonne,
> Apprends-nous à ne pas nous brûler chaque jour
> Et à ne pas mourir du chagrin d'être au monde (*PFM* 14)

This Joan has very different connotations from Vichy's virtuous, anglophobic Joan. For Resisters, she represented the urge and ability to rid France of her oppressive Occupiers. The cross of Lorraine became the symbol of liberation for the Free French in London. In 'Octobre', Seghers predicts that the hostages killed at Châteaubriant will rise at the side of Joan of Arc who, in turn, is reborn through their martyrdom.

> (...) ils renaîtront à la fin de ce calvaire
> (...)
> Aux côtés de la Jeanne au visage de fer
> Née de leur sang de fusillés (*DP* 10)

When Aragon commemorates Resistance heroes of the Vercors, in 'Du poète à son parti', he perceives them against the same permanent backdrop of heroic combat that stretches from Joan of Arc: 'Je vois Jeanne filer Roland sonne le cor / C'est le temps des héros qui renaît au Vercors' (*DF* 79).[50]

The same tradition of combat against oppression is invoked through poets' descriptions of Paris as the time-honoured seat of Republican struggle within France. Paris is, as Aragon puts it, the 'Perpétuel brûlot de la patrie' (*DF* 77). Such a description contrasts markedly with the alienating images of a stagnant, silent Paris seen earlier in this chapter. In Eluard's 'Tuer', the vigourless 'étrange paix sur Paris' is countered by a glimpse of renewed vitality, as Paris is restored to its traditional place

as a centre of combat:

> Il tombe cette nuit
> Dans le silence
> Une étrange lueur sur Paris
> Sur le bon vieux coeur de Paris
> La lueur sourde du crime
> Prémédité sauvage et pur
> Du crime contre les bourreaux
> Contre la mort (*ARA; OC* I 1256)

The Paris celebrated by Aragon is always a Paris of insurrection, from the Revolution, to the Commune, to resistance against Nazism: a 'Paris qui n'est Paris qu'arrachant ses pavés' (*YE* 85). In 'Paris', Aragon writes:

> Rien n'a l'éclat de Paris dans la poudre
> Rien n'est si pur que son front d'insurgé
> Rien n'est si fort ni le feu ni la foudre
> Que mon Paris défiant les dangers
> Rien n'est si beau que ce Paris que j'ai (*DF* 77)

Again, in 'Le Paysan de Paris chante', Aragon remembers Paris as a centre of rebellion against oppression and reminds the reader that 'Toujours l'échafaud vaguement y respire' (*EEP* 110). The poem is a mixture of old and new images of Paris, linked by the same spirit of combat and inspired by the same dream of freedom:

> Paris rêve et jamais il n'est plus redoutable
> Plus orageux jamais que muet mais rêvant
> (...)
> Le rêve est une terre à ce nouvel Antée (*EEP* 109-10)

It is important to recognise that the type of oppression traditionally combated within *le pays réel* was essentially the oppression of ideals. The defence of France was not so much a defence of territory as one of the values embodied in that territory. Hence the espousal of Republican *ideals* by poets threatened by Nazism and Vichyism. The freedom that Resisters were fighting for was, in part, a freedom to 'repatriate' the ideals of Republicanism. When Emmanuel remembers the France of old, he remembers its justice (*LGP* 96). When Jouve invokes the name of Saint-Just, he does so both as a reminder of France as it once was - 'un princier pays d'arbres solaires' (*VP* 259) - and as a spur to reawaken the ideals cherished by Saint-Just:

> Saint-Just épouvantable à l'ennemi secret
> (...) Nous allons revoir ta vérité
> Ton amour et ta herse (*VP* 259)

Particularly relevant here is the figure of Charles Péguy. For a Collaborator like Drieu la Rochelle, the adopted hero of Pétain's National Revolution was exemplary for his anti-pacifism, for his Catholicism and for his celebrations of the French soil. For Resisters such as Aragon and Seghers, Péguy was exemplary for having championed the cause of Dreyfus and extolled the virtues of socialism. Resisters remembered what Collaborators conveniently forgot: Péguy was a staunch Republican who believed that the Republic stood for universal justice. A friend of Bergson and Julien Benda, he strongly rejected the anti-semitism of Maurras and 'L'Action Française'. He believed the real France to be the guardian of such values as liberty, charity and honour, and used Joan of Arc to epitomise it. This was the Péguy commemorated by Resisters in the Editions de Minuit volume, *Péguy-Péri,* where extracts of Péguy's work were published alongside the words of the exemplary Resistance hero, Gabriel Péri.

Another French tradition remembered in Resistance poetry was that of Christianity. While Vichy valued the Catholic tradition in France for the example it gave of social conservatism, Resistance poets applauded the Christian heritage for having invested France with humanitarian ideals. Even Aragon sprinkled his wartime poetry with occasional references to 'le merveilleux chrétien' (*EEP* 102) because, as he explains: 'j'ai appris à respecter [une] foi que je ne partagerai jamais. Ce qu'il y a de généreux, d'humain dans cette foi divine. Pour tout dire, de français'(*EEP* 102). Just as the values associated with Republicanism were stamped underfoot in *le pays légal,* so were the values of Christianity threatened in France by Nazism. Jouve depicts Nazism as a demonic force or an antichrist. In 'A la France', he writes:

> La bête de la mer est la bête de fer
> Hitlérienne! et le chiffre 666 à son front
> Elle avance contre nos coeurs! (*PFJ* 42)

In Occupied France, 'Dieu souffre' and consequently, 'La face humaine est offensée' (*PFJ* 42). Masson, too, imagines that the new France has been abandoned by Christ. In 'Prière pour la France', he addresses Christ and asks 'Qu'est devenue ma patrie? L'as-tu bannie?' (*DM* 66). Again, this indicates that the lost, ideal *patrie* is one invested with Christian values.

The fact that this common patrimony of Christianity is a heritage of humanitarian values enables Jouve to ally the two traditions that dominate France's past: that of Christianity and that of Republicanism. Jouve sees a natural blending of these two traditions of freedom in France. The first is the urge towards spiritual freedom, or a state of free grace. It is represented by Christ and the Christian tradition in France. The second, which complements it, is the urge towards political freedom. This, Jouve associates with the French Revolution. Jouve imagines these two traditions as two eternal towers in 'A la France', where images of the Revolution merge with images of Christianity, under the one banner of freedom:

> Et France! envoyée des deux tours éternelles
> La croix du Christ encor se voit contre ton sein
> Et sur ton front léger le bonnet phrygien
> Poursuit à mort la guerre au tueur pourrissant
> Tes beaux yeux consacrés par la Liberté pure
> Le sang rouge, le bleu divin, et l'ange blanc (*PFJ* 44)

The idea that France is preserved in an amalgam of these two traditions argues once again the spiritual and universal nature of the *patrie* that Resistance poets sought to defend. The 'glorious' images of France's past, whether drawn from a tradition of Republicanism or from a Christian tradition, reflect universal humanitarian ideals such as freedom, justice, Christian charity and fraternal love.

Much has been made in this chapter of the permanent nature of *le pays réel* - of the fact that it is preserved in memories of the past and through specifically French traditions. This is not to say that the Resisters' ideal *patrie* was reactionary or regressive. One of the things that distinguishes it most from 'la France éternelle' of Pétain is that the values from the past that comprise *le pays réel* are presented as values that must be permanently tested, restated and renewed. A firmly dialectical approach to the past is established in Resistance poetry, where images of the past and values from the past are subject to constant renewal. If *le pays réel* is composed of humanitarian ideals gleaned from the past, the permanence of *le pays réel* lies in its perpetual redefinition of these eternal ideals. For Resistance writers, an essential truth is that 'La patrie se fait tous le jours'.[51]

One of the best examples of this dialectical approach to history can be found in the work of Frénaud. In common with other poets, Frénaud uses glorious images of France's past as a spur to patriotism. In '14 Juillet', he celebrates the fall of the Bastille: the perfect, traditional occasion for a display of patriotism. Frénaud sings of the Republic and of its tricolour, incarnate in the wine and the grapevines of France. He instructs the young with this ideal Republic:

> le rouge des gros vins bleus
> la blancheur de mon âme
> Je chante les moissons de la République
> sur la tête des enfants sages
> le soir du quatorze juillet (*IPP* 32)

He sings too of its intoxicating *fraternité*. Significantly, this *fraternité* comes at the crossroads of 'sighs of age' and 'youthful dreams', or at the meeting point of memories and promises. In other words, such images of the past as the Republic, its tricolour and its ideal of *fraternité* do not remain rooted in the past. They are rallying points at the intersection of past and future, used by Frénaud to spur action and change. That those images are motivating forces is further evidenced by Frénaud's use of terms such as 'l'ivresse de fraternité', 'le reverdissement de l'espoir' and 'les moissons de la République', all of which suggest movement and growth. The fact that he heaps such images 'sur la tête des enfants sages' provides yet another pointer towards the future.

The use made of the past as a spur to the present and future of France is one token of the dialectic of history in Resistance poetry. Aragon describes his evocations of France's past history as inflammatory myths: 'Ces mythes / Qui nous brûlaient le sang dans notre obscurité' (*EEP* 110). For Masson, the memory of France's illustrious dead likewise rekindles the concept of *patrie*. He writes: 'la France réchauffe ses mains bafouées sous la cuisse des morts' (*DM* 49). The topos of the dead in Resistance poetry is clearly outlined as a combative device, used to fire the present with a will to fight for *le pays réel*. In Masson's words again: 'les morts vont, ils montent vers les épaules de la patrie couchée dans les blés, ils poussent leur orgueil comme un canon de soleil / et ils tirent' (*DM* 40). One of the main lessons of France's history is, as Aragon puts it, that 'Chaque jour peut être Valmy' (*DF* 16): like other

cherished episodes from France's Republican past, Valmy represents a *patrie* that is virtual and yet to be realised. The past of France is not so much a memory as a promise.

Frénaud is more conscious than others of the dangers of using glorious images of the past on which to build hope for the future. Fully aware of their illusory nature, he describes such images as an artifice woven by the poet: as 'l'artifice qui va ranimer, / devant, derrière, les journées grises' (*IPP* 32). He believes, however, that a fight for freedom must be re-enacted in France, and this belief leads him to concede that images of glory, illusory or not, are necessary to France. His song becomes a lucid celebration, not of the certainty of France's triumph, or even of the certainty of the glorious past remembered, traditionally, on Bastille day, but of the certainty of having to believe in such triumph and glory: 'Le monde est en liesse, buvons et croyons!' (*IPP* 33). With a typical mixture of regret and jubilation, Frénaud admits that one of the fundamental rights of man is the right to hope:

> Je bois à la joie du peuple, au droit de l'homme
> de croire à la joie au moins une fois l'an.
> A l'iris tricolore de l'oeil apparaissant
> entre les grandes paupières de l'angoisse.
> A la douceur précaire, à l'illusion de l'amour (*IPP* 33)

'Enorme figure de la déesse raison' continues Frénaud's use of the Revolutionary theme. The Goddess, like the Revolution, is an embodiment of the principles of justice and freedom. Here, she hails the approach of a popular, 'fraternal' victory:

> O Victoire enchantée sur les trétaux défaits,
> tout le butin à tous souriant amical.
> Quand l'univers fume d'amour vers toi, peuple souverain,
> qui te lèves hésitant dans ton pouvoir,
> quand vous frémissez, frères,
> dans le vin, dans la vomissure moite sur les hauts marbres,
> dans les entrailles de nos morts, les ayant lues,
> je siffle, je proclame les droits de l'homme d'être un dieu. (*IPP* 41)

However, the hope sparked by this echoed declaration of human rights is quickly dashed, in a manner typical of Frénaud. The poet cannot offer such a consoling image of hope without questioning it and exposing its illusory nature. Forewarned by his description of the Goddess as 'l'incendiaire sirène' (*IPP* 39), the reader is now subjected to an account of the Revolution betraying and destroying itself. The crux of

this betrayal is that as soon as 'victory' was achieved, the dynamic ideals that motivated the Revolution became static. So, he writes:

> Les eaux grasses du temps ont ranci mon appel.
> Entourée de drapeaux pétrifiés comme un lavoir,
> dégradée par mon souffle même,
> par l'haleine empuantie de la victoire savourée. (*IPP* 42)

In the words of G.-E. Clancier, commenting on this poem: 'Au lieu de l'embrasement passionné ne demeure plus qu'un simulacre, le vol des drapeaux s'est pétrifié, la mystique révolutionnaire n'est plus que prétexte à discours, à statues de squares.'[52] Frénaud writes that the goddess is a 'mère trompeuse' (*IPP* 44) whose words are a 'faux arc-en-ciel avant-coureur de nos désastres' (*IPP* 42). For Frénaud, the ideals that comprise *le pays réel* must be permanently vibrant, passionate and dynamic.

Both '14 Juillet' and 'Enorme figure de la déesse raison' express one of the central themes in Frénaud's work: that of a constant quest for some inaccessible domain, pursued in a movement of hope and disillusionment. This theme continues to inform Frénaud's poetry after the war. In 'Où est mon pays', for example, he writes of the frustrating and alluring inaccessibility of his true country, which is

> (...) dans les lointains aux confins d'ici.
> C'est hier perdu sans avoir su.
> Ce n'est pas ailleurs, ce doit être ici.
> Je cherche et je trouve presque, et je me perds (*IPP* 137)

In Frénaud's work, *le pays réel* is also an ontological myth, in so far as Frénaud believes that part of the human condition is to search for a 'vrai domaine' (*IPP* 44) that is 'inaccessiblement attirante' (*IPP* 45).

At the same time as it is intensely personal, this notion of *le pays réel* reflects an idea commonly voiced in Resistance poetry: *the patrie* is a dynamic aspiration myth much more than it is an accomplished ideal. It is something to be sought after constantly and it is constantly redefined in the search. When Frénaud pursues it in images of the past and proposes, for example, memories of the Revolution as necessary images of hope, his main concern is with the movement between despair and hope or desire and fulfilment. Again, this is typical of the treatment of the past in a lot of Resistance poetry. The past is presented as a signpost along the way and never as a final definition of *le pays réel.*

Seghers is another poet who rarely allows the past to stand still. His Resistance poems almost always contain a projection towards the future rather than a dwelling on the past. Again, this is firmly in tune with Seghers' personal outlook. Writing about his life and work in *Pierre Seghers,* he says:

> Je ne voudrais pas que l'on considère ce petit livre comme un recueil de souvenirs. Aux repères, j'ai toujours préféré les jalons. (..) La vie, l'aventure de la vie, la découverte me sont plus précieuses, plus viscéralement miennes que le retour vers ce qui fut. (p. 7)

This attitude informs all of his wartime poetry. In 'La Fête', for instance, Seghers alludes to Joan of Arc and Roland - figures who embody the usual tradition of combat:

> C'est la ronde, on dirait, des feux de la St-Jean
> Et c'est Jeanne ou Roland menant la farandole
> Les pavés jaillissants comme autant de paroles
> Que la nuit boit; (...) (*CP* 10)

Seghers goes on to project the reader urgently into a future, with an apparent rejection of the past:

> Où donc est le passé? Sa musique d'aveugle
> S'est éteinte comme un grillon l'hiver venu
> Nous avions trop dansé sur des airs trop connus
> Dans le colin-maillard du carnaval des voeux
>
> Gloire au jour qui va naître, à l'Avenir! (*CP* 10)

The metaphor of the dance is crucial. It embodies the thematic tension within the poem between past and future. It comprises a pattern of movement that is at the same time traditional - relying on the past - and unique - a movement reenacted in the present. For Seghers as for Frénaud, the past is a dynamic force. Being a 'clairvoyant passé' (*CP* 20), it survives into the present and projects the reader into a future which is, by the same token, a 'Futur antérieur' (the title of one collection of Seghers's wartime poetry).

France's past, then, is presented as a signpost pointing to the *patrie* of the future. By the same token, and perhaps surprisingly, the events within present-day France - the France of the Resistance - are sometimes presented in the poetry as having happened in an already distant past: as an established part of French history. A mingling of past, present and future to produce a dynamic history of the *patrie* is referred to indirectly by Aragon in 'Les larmes se ressemblent', where he asks:

Qui peut dire où la mémoire commence
Qui peut dire où le temps présent finit
Où le passé rejoindra la romance (*YE* 54)

In 'Tradition and Myth in French Resistance poetry', Ian Higgins points to 'the ready use of a past tense to refer to the present, as if the text were written from the point of view of a future historian' (p. 48). This 'historical' presentation of the present is often seen in the work of Seghers. His poem 'Août' is a good example of it. Written three years before the Liberation , the poem is mainly narrated in the imperfect tense. Seghers refers to deaths that were unaccounted for, and the heroism of those shot by Nazi firing squads - common occurrences in 1941:

(...) on vivait là le mystère

Cousu; on ne rendait pas les corps. Celui
Qui partait était crevé de douze balles
En criant comme un crieur annonce aux halles
Le jour plus fort que toute mesure de nuit (*FA* 18-19)

In 1943, right in the middle of the Nazi terror in France, Seghers writes: 'Les hommes qui partaient tombaient comme des pommes / Ils avaient le coeur plein de vers' (*DP* 33); 'Le ciel tournait comme une éponge de grand feu' (*DP* 54); 'On entendait glapir les loups dans les vallées, / Nous étions tous perdus!' (*TM* 38).

This might be seen as a device used by Seghers to distance himself from the horror that he describes: a simple and rather crude way of expressing the wish that these violent times were over. Any such escapism would hardly have been countenanced by Seghers; it would certainly be out of keeping with the tenor of the rest of his Resistance poetry. It seems more accurate to view this use of past tenses as one of the means by which Seghers voices an awareness that history was being made at the time, and a will for his own words to be part of its making. History is, after all, an account of events. Aragon emphasises the linguistic nature of history in 'De l'exactitude historique en poésie', where he refers to 'images et Chansons qui à la fois ancienne et jeunes reprenaient pour le monde entier la légende enivrante qu'on appelle l'Histoire de France' (*EEP* 97). Usually historical accounts are written in retrospect. The fact that Seghers and other poets wrote them in the heat of the Resistance is a token of their will to make the events within present-day France become history: both

to make the evils of the Occupation a thing of the past and to ensure that these times of oppression and courage are remembered in the history books of the future.

Seghers's 'Dans la nuit', written in 1941, is a good poem to look at in this respect. The central theme of the poem is of a country that strains away from an oppressive silence towards a voice, and freedom. The first six stanzas, narrated in the present tense, describe the silence of the French countryside, broken only by bells hung around the necks of rams in a flock of sheep being herded through the night. These bells, by dint of the sound they make in the night, become a sign of hope and a promise of freedom. In the final stanza, Seghers switches to the imperfect tense. He describes a song having filled the skies and relayed courage throughout the land: 'Le chant s'enflait près de Midas / Tremblant et le courage courait les postes' (*FA* 14). Through this sudden change to a past tense, Seghers intimates that this courage, once voiced in song, becomes history: both an account and an accomplishment.

Another more explicit connection between history and the poets' account of the times is made in 'Le Silence des mers', where Seghers writes:

> Les poètes chantaient et Gomorrhe et Sodome
> (...)
> Le courant qu'apportaient d'invisibles pylônes
> Chantait sa force et son secret
> (...)
> Et le pays vivait comme il vit dans les livres (*DP* 33-4)

In 'Le carrousel', Seghers intimates that if no such words of strength and courage were voiced - if the events of the present were left unsung - then the present would lapse into 'préhistoire' (*DP* 38). The poets' words are an essential part of making history happen:

> (...) Une image parlante
>
> Une fille de feu d'un poète dira
> 43, feutre étouffant, la préhistoire
> Les violettes vendues contre deux mots d'espoir
> Et l'épée de l'espoir si pesante à nos bras (*DP* 37-8)

The same idea, that the poets' voicing of the times would contribute to the 'légende enivrante' that is the history of France, is expressed by Seghers in 'L'Avenir'. The poem is addressed to readers of the future - a future, moreover, that Seghers is conscious of creating through his own armoury of words of hope:

Je chante et je construis pour le futur
(...)
Ecoutez vous tous qui êtes comme des feuilles dans les chênes,
Je ne chante pas la pourriture des feuilles mortes
Mais le jaillissement vers la lumière et vers la joie
Mes doigts creusent des sillons pour vos graines
Ici germera le futur

Nous planterons autour du désert une barrière, on
y lira : ici l'Histoire. (*FA* 25-6)

To forge history, as Resistance poets were aware of doing, was to help forge a future for France.

Resistance poets clearly wanted the events of this war to become as significant a part of France's history as Valmy, or the storming of the Bastille, or Joan of Arc's victory over the oppressors of the time - episodes from France's past to which the events of the Resistance were being constantly compared. The poets' own voicing or mythicisation of the events would help make this happen.

In 'Octobre', Seghers presents the martyred Châteaubriant hostages as the heroes of a future France, who will be remembered, and talked about, like Joan of Arc and Eustache de Saint-Pierre. He refers to the hostages as 'enfants criblés qui toujours chantent' (*DP* 10) and writes:

Ils ressusciteront vêtus de feu dans nos écoles,
Arrachés aux bras de leurs enfants ils entendront
Avec la guerre, l'exil et la fausse parole
D'autres enfants dire leurs noms (*DP* 10)

Several of the poems inspired by the execution of Gabriel Péri express the same certainty, that people in the future will continue to invoke the name of the dead hero and continue to talk about him. Aragon's triumphant cry in 'Légende de Gabriel Péri': 'Il chante encore il chante encore' (*DF* 67), echoes Seghers's allusion to France's 'enfants criblés qui toujours chantent'. The hostages continue to sing in the poets' own words. These words will be read in the future and superseded by other words spoken and written about Châteaubriant executions and the killing of Gabriel Péri. In 'Tombeau de Gabriel Péri', Masson addresses his words to Péri in the manner of a devotional prayer. He predicts that children in the future will continue to address Péri as they would pray to a saint: 'Nos enfants te parleront tranquilles à travers ta châsse

de pierre / comme à un grand saint étendu qui les regarde' (*LNM* 9). In 'Mémoire de Péri', Emmanuel writes: 'Vous qui l'avez aimé ce mort vous soit un temple / dont les hymnes futures emplissent le vaisseau' (*TP* 28).

Similarly, in 'Ecrit pour vous', Masson predicts that the prisons of la Santé, la Roquette and Gurs (infamous then throughout France) would become as well-known, as significant and as widely referred to place-names as Stalingrad and Chaeronea:

> Comme l'on dit Stalingrad l'on dira un jour la Santé
> vieille vieille bastille où saignent mes héros,
> L'on écrira Gurs ou la Roquette comme l'on écrit Chéronée (*LNM* 14)

To the prisoners themselves Masson makes this promise: 'Vos noms comme des étoiles monteront d'entre les barreaux' (*LNM* 14).

In other words, Resistance heroes, like other, more distant heroes of France's past, are intended by Resistance poets to become part of France's historical heritage and, as this implies, part of the French language. This point is developed in Chapter IV.

For the moment, all this serves to indicate that for Resistance poets, the history of France is not something static: it is a continuing process. French history is an adequate image of the *patrie* only in so far as it demands to be realised and re-realised in a constant testing and restating of ideals that comprise what Aragon refers to as 'l'éternelle réalité française' (*EEP* 97). The events of the war become part of that history by dint of the fact that they are (and will be) voiced as a redefinition of these permanent ideals. A quotation from Masson's 'Camps de concentration' will help to illustrate this. The poet addresses the camps' detainees:

> Les temps viendront où l'on enseignera l'Histoire; il faut
> qu'on l'apprenne à nos enfants
> qu'ils déclinent le mot liberté qui est la rose de la guerre,
> qu'ils la voient à vos doigts
> couleur d'aube s'effeuiller sur la France douloureuse de
> mil neuf cent quarante-trois. (*LNM* 29)

Ideals such as freedom, *fraternité* and justice were put strongly to the test in France during the Occupation, as they had been in the France of 1793 and in the France of 1871. These ideals, and hence the concept of *patrie* that embodies them, are permanent only in so far as they are repeatedly challenged and repeatedly restated. The

history of France, as restated by Resistance poets, serves as a reminder that the French *patrie* is affirmed in a vital new realisation of ideals with which France is 'traditionally' associated.

3. A CULTURAL HERITAGE

One part of France's past that Resistance poets were particularly anxious to reinstate was the strong literary and cultural heritage that had been the glory of France for centuries. This crucial part of France's heritage came under serious attack during the Occupation.

Loiseaux's recent work, *La Littérature de la défaite et de la collaboration,* gives an excellent outline of the various forms of cultural repression used by Nazis in Occupied France. Centred on a translation of Bernard Payr's *Phönix Oder Asche?,* it emphasises the importance to Nazi Germany of ridding France of its cultural autonomy and encouraging a new art and literature, based on the principle of collaboration.

The most obvious way in which France lost its cultural autonomy after the Armistice was in the German-controlled censorship of French literature. Many works of literature were banned outright, most notably by the two 'Listes Otto', established respectively in September 1940 and July 1942.[53] This proscription of certain books was complemented by the German authorities' control of French publishing. Initially, this was controlled by three organisms: the 'Institut Allemand' in Paris, the 'Propaganda Abteilung' and the 'Antenne Rosenberg'. In September 1940, a 'convention de censure' was implemented. Although this 'Convention' applied only to the Occupied zone, the Vichy authorities decided that it complemented their own aims in creating a new French state, and so this form of censorship spread to unoccupied France. In 1941, the censorship procedure was revised, with the proviso that all books had to be given a control number by the 'Propaganda-Staffel'. While censorship was obviously difficult to enforce - witness the contraband and clandestine writings of the Resistance - those found responsible of 'intellectual crimes' against the New Order were punished by deportation and sometimes by execution.

In collaborationist circles, these obvious acts of repression were accepted in the spirit of contrition that was fostered after the Armistice. Time and again, the collaborationist press justified censorship, directly or indirectly, by arguing that France's literature - a literature of decadent Republicanism - had to be purged of its unhealthy elements for the good of the *patrie*. After the first 'liste Otto', which suppressed over two thousand titles, *France-Allemagne* claimed that

> En diffusant les oeuvres de déracinés, de dilettantes, pour qui les mots de patrie et de morale avaient perdu toute signification, on étendait leur influence dissolvante, on contribuait à corrompre le goût du public. (Quoted in Loiseaux; p. 67)

The banning of such works was, therefore, part of the Collaboration's moral campaign against decadence. Pre-war literature was condemned as a 'Littérature des vaincus', responsible for having engendered a spirit of decadence, individualism and internationalism in France. The collaborationist press carried out a veritable witch-hunt of pre-war writers. Jacques Bompard devoted his *Responsabilités littéraires d'hier et de demain* to the question of 'literary defeatism' before the phoney war. Henry Bordeaux dealt with the same subject in *Les Murs sont bons*. Joseph Rouault, writing in *l'Appel*, categorised writing in France since 1918 as a dangerous, corrupting 'littérature de fuite' (9 septembre 1943, p. 4).

Above all, an individualist literature was blamed for the lack of moral fibre in pre-war France. The attacks on individualism in the collaborationist press reflect the ideal of collectivism that was referred to earlier in the chapter. In *La Gerbe*, Camille Mauclair contrasts French pre-war writers' unpatriotic individualism with the healthy, collective ideal formed by German writers of the same period:

> Tandis qu'outre-Rhin une jeunesse fanatisée abdiquait les séductions et les désordres de l'individualisme, et les immolait à un idéal collectif, nos ténors littéraires détruisaient à plaisir la cohésion nationale, avec une mentalité de vaincus.
> (2 janvier 1941, p. 7)

Surrealists, writers as diverse as Proust, Gide, Cocteau, Genet, Giraudoux, Valéry, Romains, Mauriac and Bernanos, and French Romantic poets were lumped together and found guilty of creating an 'individualisme immoraliste' in art that was a 'Négation de la Patrie, de l'Ecole, de la Famille'.[54] The Surrealists' pursuit of

anarchic freedom had helped to 'nuire, intellectuellement, à l'âme de la nation, au génie de la patrie'.[55] Gide, it was claimed, devoted his talents to 'la démolition de la religion et de la famille'; the immorality of his writings was 'responsable de la déroute de bien des âmes'.[56] In *La Seule France,* Maurras warned against the Romantic movement (p. 245) and argued that Classical writers were less likely to undermine morals in France. The literary pages of *L'Action française* noticeably favour pre-nineteenth-century, classical poetry. *La Gerbe* held a 'Prix Ronsard de poésie', open only to 'les oeuvres dites de "poésie classique"'.[57] Free verse betokened an obscure individualism that was detrimental to the *patrie.* All in all, it was considered necessary to control literary output in France and to stem this wave of immorality and anarchic individualism. That this control should come from Germany was no great matter for concern. Censorship was an acceptable discipline; in the words of Drieu la Rochelle: 'Les bonnes époques littéraires sont des époques de censure'.[58]

Writers were courted with cultural visits to Germany. The best known of these were the congresses held at Weimar. The first took place in November 1941; writers who participated included Drieu la Rochelle, André Fraigneau, Fernandez, Chardonne and Brasillach. In its report of 15 September 1941, the Propaganda-Abteilung described the objective of the visit: 'Pour ces Français, cette invitation dans le Reich signifie qu'ils se préoccuperont désormais encore plus du problème franco-allemand, en particulier; et du problème européen, en général.'[59]

Writers who took part in the two Weimar congresses were photographed and filmed, and used by Nazi propaganda in France and other occupied countries. Most of them saw fit afterwards to spread a reassuring vision of Germany. So, in the words of Loiseaux, 'Ces grandes manoeuvres contribuaient à donner à la collaboration politique, économique et policière l'indispensable contrepoint culturel à l'avènement de l'"Europe Nouvelle" ' (p. 104).

Finally, at a time when it was difficult for many French publishers to find enough paper for their needs, there was paper aplenty to publish huge numbers of Collaborationist works, like Fabre-Luce's *Journal de la France* and Rebatet's *Décombres.* Rebatet was to recall in 1970: 'Les Allemands dirigeaient les attributions

de papier. Ils ne laisseraient pas en panne le livre le plus fasciste qui eût jamais paru en France.'[60]

In Resistance circles, the measures taken to change the course of French culture were perceived as a definite threat. France's cultural and intellectual heritage - an essential part of the French *patrie* - was considered to be under attack. The first issue of *La Pensée libre* exposes this threat:

> LA PENSEE FRANCAISE EST INTERDITE EN FRANCE
> Nous précisons.
> Ce qui est interdit en France, ce sont la littérature, la science, la philosophie et l'art dans la mesure où ils relèvent, dans le passé ou dans le présent, d'une vie intellectuelle française INDEPENDANTE; dans toute la mesure où ils expriment et alimentent des aspirations françaises.[61]

Similarly, Jacques Decour's editorial for *Les Lettres françaises,* published posthumously, reveals and denounces the plan to repress France's greatness by denying writers and artists their freedom of expression:

> HITLER et ses complices rêvent d'assigner à nos Lettres, à notre Science et à nos Arts une place de second plan dans une Europe livrée à la barbarie germanique. La grandeur française les offusque: il faut la mettre sous le boisseau. Le régime qui nous est imposé, où toute liberté de pensée et d'expression est supprimée: où seuls ont le droit d'écrire ou de parler ceux qui chantent les louanges de l'ennemi, préfigure ce que serait dans "l'Ordre Nouveau" le sort de notre Culture.[62]

After the war, Fouchet was to write about the Occupation as a time when 'la vraie gloire de la France, qui n'avait jamais résidé dans la cervelle des militaires prêts à abattre la République, mais dans l'esprit de ses écrivains et de ses artistes, se voyait niée' (*Europe,* pp. 49-50).

In response to this threat, Resistance poets and writers made a concerted effort to maintain the independent tradition of French culture. They saw in this a means of defending the *patrie* against Nazism and the Collaboration. Concurrently, *le pays réel* was often associated with France's cultural heritage. Through this association, Resistance writers gave a clear indication of the spiritual nature of the *patrie* that they wished to defend. In 'Ma patrie, la langue française' (*PFJ*), for example, Louis Martin- Chauffier argues the spiritual, universal nature of the French *patrie* when he insists on the importance of perpetuating French culture. In his mind, the true *patrie*

was kept alive through the words of writers such as Auguste Comte, Montaigne, Rimbaud, La Bruyère and Hugo. It was essential to him that French culture should survive, for its survival marked 'la survivance et le renouvellement perpétuel' of France's 'valeurs spirituelles' (p. 210). The same association between *patrie* and culture is made by Max-Pol Fouchet, when he argues that France is best defended by restoring French culture. Here, he revoices the original aims of *Fontaine*:

> Il nous parut (...) que *Fontaine* devait contribuer à ranimer (...) la loi d'une patrie vaincue par les armes en l'appelant à recenser ses intouchables richesses et à mieux connaître le génie qui les lui permettait. (...) Quand une nation représente aux yeux du monde la liberté qui seule permet la recherche et la pensée, et qu'elle peut témoigner du bien fondé de ce principe par des oeuvres inépuisables, il nous a semblé à tous, par-delà nos divergences personnelles, que le nier serait nier la France, sa grandeur et son message. Nous savons ce que nous avons conquis et ce que nous voulons garder. Il s'agit de continuer la France. (*Fontaine*, No. 14, juin 1941, p. 25)

Literary reviews such as *Fontaine*, *Confluences* and *Poésie* were consciously instrumental in promoting the old tradition of French culture within *le pays légal*. Ian Higgins' article, '"Assurer les relais": Literary heritage in Resistance' - an impressively wide-ranging account of the network of references to past literature in Resistance publications - gives an excellent outline of the role assumed in this respect by *Poésie* in particular.

I will concentrate here on just two facets of the Resisters' use of France's literary heritage. First, while great importance was certainly attached to a national, specifically French form of literature, this is not to say that this literary heritage was used to bolster any chauvinistic notion of France. Much as a history peculiar to France was used to highlight the universal values of the French *patrie*, France's literary heritage is shown to be a messenger of ideals that may be French in origin, but are expansive and universal in their appeal. Second, and following on from this, the literary heritage of France is not presented as an accomplishment, or a glorious, consoling image of France which people can sit back and admire. Like the history of France, the country's literary heritage is something that must be perpetually renewed, as the values that it carries are to be perpetually redefined. Once again, through a literary heritage, the *patrie* is pronounced as an ideal which 'se fait tous les jours'.

Aragon was particularly keen to promote a certain concept of national greatness through France's literary heritage. In 'La leçon de Ribérac', he draws the reader's attention to the latter part of the twelfth century. This was a time similar to the early 1940s - 'un temps où mon pays était divisé, et par la langue et dans sa terre' (*YE* 22). Aragon points out that it was also the golden age of medieval French literature, when themes such as 'la morale courtoise' were born in France and carried throughout Europe:

> C'est qu'alors, dans la seconde moitié du douzième siècle, la France connut cette gloire. Cet orgueil immense d'envahir *poétiquement* l'Europe, c'est alors qu'elle fut pour la première fois la France européenne, comme elle devait le redevenir au dix-huitième et au dix-neuvième siècle par l'expansion de la philosophie des lumières. (*YE* 124)

This article is subtitled 'ou l'Europe française'. Readers of the time would have recognized this as an allusion to the role plotted for France in Hitler's New Europe. Yet the lesson of Ribérac is not one of subservience. It teaches that 'la grandeur française' (*YE* 122) lies in the spread of humanist ideals from France through its literature. Medieval literature carried throughout Europe the ethic of courtly love, while Enlightenment literature carried the humanist, Revolutionary ideals of writers such as Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau. This was not only a comfort for the troubled France of the 1940s, it was a 'viatique nécessaire et grisant' (*YE* 124). Aragon implies here that within present day France, writers inspired by 'La Leçon de Ribérac' would themselves create an 'inspiring' literature of ideals associated with France.

In his poem, 'Le Legs', Desnos points out that Victor Hugo left such a heritage of ideals in the hands of France, their guarantor:

> (...) par devant notaire
> Il a bien précisé quel legs il voulait faire
> Le notaire a nom: France, et le legs: Liberté (*DA* 223)

This poem was written to counteract Vichy's distortion of Hugo's heritage. At one point, Hugo had feared that a blood-thirsty 'République de Marat' would result from the 1848 insurrection in France. Vichy used this in an anti-Resistance poster. Desnos comments:

> Ces gens de peu d'esprit et de faible culture
> Ont besoin d'alibis dans leur sale aventure
> Ils ont dit:. "Le bonhomme est mort. Il est dompté." (*DA* 223)

Desnos's poem restores Hugo's abused legacy and argues that the France inherited from Hugo is properly the custodian of universal ideals like freedom. It also exemplifies the process whereby France's literary heritage is renewed and contemporised.

Indeed, there is almost a case for arguing that Hugo was a French Resistance poet. Michel Leiris signed his poem 'Corruption' with the pseudonym 'Hugo Vic' in *L'Honneur des poètes II . Europe* (p. 62). Hugo's poems were published alongside those of Resistance poets in *Almanach des Lettres francaises* (pp. 43, 70), and Hugo's 'O drapeau de Wagram' was distributed during the Occupation as an anonymous clandestine tract. These are just a few amongst scores of acknowledgements to Hugo made at the time. To pay tribute to Hugo was to pay tribute to, and revoice, the universal ideals that he defended so strongly in *Les Châtiments* - ideals that were outlawed in a France overrun by Nazism.

Tardieu's poem, 'Les statues d'une haute histoire',[63] is a good example of the need poets felt to restore France's abused cultural heritage, by continuing and renewing its tradition in their own work. The poem centres on the melting down of statues erected to Zola and Hugo in Paris. Tardieu writes: 'Les statues d'une haute Histoire / on nous les a pour les canons volées.' This desecration of French culture is expressed through images of loss and absence. Where solid statues once stood erect, the wind now whistles desolately 'sur les socles nus'. All that remains of the figures of Zola and Hugo are long, haunting shadows, reminiscent of a de Chirico painting, in so far as they are cast by a memory of form and not by the forms themselves. The fact that this memory persists is all-important, for it indicates that the culture is still intact. The end of the poem tells how this can be possible:

> Mais sur les socles nus où le vent pleure
> près de ces hautes ombres, vainement
> par l'ennemi souffletées et tirées,
> d'autres héros se forment lentement.

- other heroes and, it is implied, other writers, fighting in the same tradition.

This poem echoes remarks made by René Laporte in his article, 'Le Silence Zola' (*Dom*). Laporte refers to the same melting down of statues in Paris and says that 'le

socle d'Hugo, sur sa place, est comme le dolmen d'une religion à trouver' (pp. 369-70). This once and future religion is founded on ideals expressed in the work of writers such as Hugo and Zola. Laporte demands that a new statue and a new voice be found for Zola: 'Je réclame pour Zola une bouche ouverte, une bouche qui parle' (p. 373). It is the responsibility of living writers to continue and to renew a literary heritage that spreads the ideals of *le pays réel.*

This brief appraisal of how France's literary heritage was used in Resistance serves to emphasise two important facets of the Resisters' concept of *patrie.* Preserved in French culture, it is an ideal *patrie*, associated with humanist values expressed in certain works of literature. Like its literature, it is dynamic and ever-changing; much less a static, eternal ideal than a permanently renewable 'religion à trouver'.

4. A NATURAL HERITAGE. THE FRENCH SOIL AS A SYMBOL OF PATRIOTISM

This section considers the use made of the French soil as a symbol of patriotism in the Occupation years. Traditionally used by right-wing patriots in France to argue an exclusive, territorial concept of *patrie*, 'la terre et les morts' became predictable bywords of the National Revolution. More surprising, perhaps, is the fact that these same symbols featured strongly in the poetry of the Resistance. This seems to be part of what Kedward describes in 'Patriots and patriotism in Vichy France' as 'the growing claim of individuals and movements on the very language and imagery which the ideological Pétainists believed was inalienably theirs' - a process whereby people 'realigned the words which had so solidly buttressed Pétain at the height of his power, and transferred them to Resistance' (p. 189).

It is also worth considering that the poets' subversive use of these traditional symbols categorises them as 'revolutionary heretics' in Péret's terms, and not as the conservatives that he criticises. For in Péret's own words, the heretic's role is always to question 'les principes sur lesquels s'appuie le mythe pour se momifier dans le dogme' (*Dés* 81).

This section comprises a description of how the French soil was expressed by Pétainists, followed by a summary of the counteractive symbolisation of the French soil by Resistance poets. The following outline helps to illustrate, once again, that for Resistance poets, the French *patrie* was not so much a stretch of territory as an attitude, or a state of mind, induced by values that are harboured within that territory.

In his early speeches, published in *Paroles aux français*, Pétain often uses the French soil as a symbol and rallying point for his ideal of an eternal French *patrie*. Proclaimed the 'maréchal-paysan' by his own propagandists, Pétain believed that the main aim of his National Revolution was to 'réenraciner (...) l'homme français dans la terre de France, où il puisa toujours, en même temps que sa substance et celle des concitoyens des villes, les solides vertus qui ont fait la force et la durée de la Patrie' (pp. 226-7). Like the fabled giant, France would rediscover 'toutes ses forces en reprenant contact avec la terre' (p. 245). This soil is the guardian of lessons from the past on which the new France would be built:

> Le peuple français porte son avenir en lui-même, dans la profondeur de soixante générations qui nous ont précédés sur notre sol et dont vous êtes les héritiers responsables. (p. 135)

For Pétain, the French soil represents rigorous discipline and self-sacrifice: virtues of a 'true' France which had been abandoned during the Third Republic. In a speech denouncing the Third Republic and urging the nation to discipline, Pétain says:

> Je hais les mensonges qui vous ont fait tant de mal. La terre, elle, ne ment pas. Elle demeure votre secours. Elle est la patrie elle-même. Un champ qui tombe en friche, c'est une portion de France qui meurt. Une jachère de nouveau emblavée, c'est une portion de France qui renaît. (p. 51)

Above all, 'la terre de France' and the peasants who worked this land were seen as the backbone of traditionalism and social conservatism in France. Farmers were revered for their heroic patience, their simple wisdom and the natural spiritual balance that they ploughed into the *patrie*. Through their stoicism and self-sacrifice, they provided 'les garanties essentielles de l'existence et de la sauvegarde du pays' (pp. 202-3). Vichy's 'return to the soil' was essentially a return to the traditionalist values of the 'real' France that it represented. French social conservatives believed that self-supporting peasants made countries strong where city populations made them

insecure, and that an antidote to the decadent culture of the city was to be found in the traditional social hierarchy of peasant life. In *Les Déracinés* (1897), Barrès proclaimed that cities uprooted France's young while an attachment to 'la terre et les morts' strengthened their characters and the character of the French nation. In the 1940s, rural life was once again envisaged as the 'fountainhead of a dwindling national vigour'.[64]

Vichy's adulation of 'la terre', the French peasantry and the joys of rural life seem more naïve than ideologically threatening. However, there are two ways in which their 'return to the earth' policies and their concept of the French soil became consonant with a more damaging ideology.

First, while Pétain believed that his 'retour à la terre' policies followed a natural French tradition, in effect they contributed to the integration of France within the Third Reich's new European Order. Robert Aron points this out in his *Histoire de Vichy 1940-1944*:

> Lorsque Pétain, préconisant le retour à la terre, définit la vocation de la France comme étant surtout agricole, il a, certes, pour premier but de favoriser notre redressement moral; mais, en même temps, son projet s'insère dans le plan de reconstruction européenne que veut réaliser le Führer.
> (Vol. I, pp. 297-8)

So Pétain's naïve ideology slotted easily into the Nazi belief that 'le sol de la France pourrait devenir le grenier des régions industrielles de l'Europe occidentale' (*Pariser Zeitung*, 9/1/44, p. 5). Aragon, for one, was not blind to the fact that Vichy's espousal of the peasant cause only masked a terrible drain on French agriculture. In *Brocéliande*, he parodies Pétain's phrase, 'La terre ne ment pas', and promises a time when French resources will be diverted back to France and away from Hitler's New Europe:

> La terre que tu creuseras ne sera plus inexplicablement stérile
> Plus inexplicablement fuyante comme une femme de mauvaise vie
> Elle ne mentira plus à Jean Pierre ou François (p. 166)[65]

Second, although Pétain's concept of 'la terre de France' was, on the surface, fairly innocuous, its ideological subsoil was the Barrésian view of France as a traditionally exclusive territory. It bolstered the chauvinistic form of nationalism that

Aragon dubs 'ce sens de jalousie, cette haine du voisin, cet orgueil de son toit' (*DF* 9). It accounts for Vichy's patriotic hatred of foreigners and for its pursuit of Freemasons and Communists who held 'unpatriotic' internationalist views. In its most extreme form, the notion of 'la terre et ses morts' manifested itself in 'traditional' expressions of anti-semitism. Certain Collaborators made it quite clear that 'la terre de France' was a sacred patrimony from which Jews were excluded. In *La Seule France*, Maurras qualifies Jews as 'ceux qui n'avaient pas de terre française à la semelle de leurs bottes' (p. 73). Jews were considered not to have taken part in the 'lente élaboration de la communauté nationale autour du château, de l'église, voire de la maison commune'. Their 'sueur n'a pas arrosé le sol national'; consequently, that soil should reject them.[66] Jews could not be regarded as French patriots because they had no feeling of belonging to a specific territory. This territorial concept of *patrie* is outlined clearly in *Le Matin:*

> L'aryen aime la terre sur laquelle il est né. Le juif, lui, n'a pas de terre et ne regarde celle sur laquelle il passe que comme une marchandise. L'aryen, étant patriote, garde jalousement la terre dont il est 'propriétaire'. Le juif se considérant comme propriétaire de l'univers entier, ne saurait être patriote et est toujours prêt à troquer la terre sur laquelle il vit. Les pieds de l'aryen sont enfoncés dans le sol; les pieds du juif sont partout, et, en définitive, nulle part. (5 janvier 1943)[67]

Clearly, Vichy's attachment to the patriotic symbol of the French soil came dangerously close to the Nazi racist ideal, *Blut und Boden.*

For Resisters, too, 'la terre et les morts' were important symbols of patriotism. Like Barrès and Pétain, they regarded the French soil as a legacy of values left by the dead. Jouve describes this earth as 'le madrépore des morts' (*VP* 78), Frénaud writes that 'le poids des morts accroche / la terre vieille et tendre' (*SF* 154), and Char says: 'La pyramide des martyrs obsède la terre' (*FM* 47). For Emmanuel, France is a 'pays aimé des morts' and thus a 'terre fidèle' (*LGP* 93). He also refers to 'les vertus du vieux sol' (*Can* 52). Aragon describes the French countryside as 'Les prés sanglants de notre histoire' (*DF* 70); Desnos refers to a 'Terre enrichie par les cadavres de tant d'hommes' (*DA* 172); one of Masson's poems is entitled 'Les Morts terriens' (*DM* 39-41); Marcenac writes: 'Terre incertaine Terre lourde / Les meilleurs de tes fils sont

étendus sur toi' (*Poésie 43*, No. 16, p. 14). In *Cahiers des prisonniers,* André Masson addresses the dead as 'Vous qui êtes entrés (...) dans la terre de France, pour nous la garder' (p. 18), and André Simon invokes his 'pères mêlés à l'épaisse campagne, / Sous les foins et les blés' (p. 30).

Yet while Pétain believed that Vichy France was fully cognate with 'la terre et les morts', for Resistance poets, *le pays légal* was an alienating travesty of the legacy left by the dead. Hence the sense of exile outlined earlier on in the chapter. For Marcenac, this land is a 'terre incertaine'. It is an earth filled, as Jouve puts it, with 'notre pensée la plus triste' (*VP* 78). Emmanuel writes of a time 'quand semblent mortes / les vertus du vieux sol'; he is unable to find his 'pays aimé des morts' in the new France, and writes: 'Je tâte en vain du pied le sol, guettant le rythme / tentant de prolonger mon sang jusqu'à tes morts' (*Can* 52).

Such a sense of alienation stems from the fact that for Resistance poets, the *patrie* was more than just a parcel of land. For them, the French soil was only a symbol of the social justice and human values that comprise *le pays réel.* Ideally, this land is imbued with justice, *fraternité* and freedom. Emmanuel, for example, addresses the plateaux of France as 'plateaux justiciers' and remembers their 'ample souffle fraternel parmi les hommes' (*LGP* 96). The ideal land promised by Jouve is, similarly, one which restates the principle of justice:

> Les idées de l'apocalypse s'étant rassises
> La Justice de feu des vraies maisons du ciel
> Habitera les murs brisés de vos maisons
> Et vos terres seront respirantes reprises (*VP* 189)

For Catholic poets like Emmanuel, Jouve and Cayrol, the French soil is invested, ideally, with Christian values. In 'Hymne de la Paix', Emmanuel regrets a time when the land was as a lover in the hands of Christ. Here he addresses Christ:

> Je pleure une douceur humaine au front des plaines
> Et leur consentement naguère à ton regard:
> visage de l'aimée entre tes mains, la Terre
> reposait embuée de bleu en ton désir (*LGP* 113)

Jouve's wartime writing was motivated, he claimed in retrospect, by 'la tendresse d'appartenir à un sol' (*En Miroir* 86). His descriptions of nature illustrate that for him, this soil was a store of Christian values. In 'Fureur des montagnes' for example, the

mountains of France contain memories of a Christian heritage and of Christian law. As in the Song of Solomon, they are 'Montagnes d'aromates Libans consumées'; they bring to mind Mount Horeb, the 'Montagne sur quoi le rocher fut ouvert', and Mount Sinai where Moses then received the laws of Christianity. For Cayrol, too, the French countryside is coloured by the image and spirit of Christ. In 'Dieu est Français', this countryside is part of an incantation to Christ:

> Jésus Royal et Jésus de Navarre
> Jésus des fleuves aux longs plis pacifiques,
> Jésus des jardins blonds en pampre sur la Loire
> Jésus du clair de lune et de la Grotte Unique (*EN* 14)

Ideals such as these were, however, lost in *le pays légal*. Resistance poets felt alienated from their native land because that land was scene to acts of inhumanity and injustice that were not compatible with the humanist tradition of *le pays réel*. It is a common feature of Resistance poetry that poets should describe France's natural heritage as a sounding board for the violence enacted throughout France.

Masson is a good example of this. He often expresses the change in France as a change in the aspect of rural France. In 'Prière pour la France', he asks: 'Où sont mes printemps fleuris d'aubépines chantant sous la gorge des colombes?' (*DM* 67). The occupying forces have turned the rich countryside to wasteland, and 'le printemps pourrit sous le chiendent des prés' (*DM* 67). In 'Poème pour Paula', France's corn and meadows are described as being bloated with blood: 'Le sang lourd des libres a rougi l'or de mes blés; comme une levure je le vois sur les prés boursoufler mes printemps' (*DM* 56). The natural surroundings are blemished by the suppression of France's freedom: 'on a tari mes vignes, on a fait courber la tête libre de mes blés sur le pas des fermes / et tout blanchissait d'angoisse' (*DM* 49).

Masson is often to be found fighting against an urge to give a 'pure' poet's portrayal of nature, as a solace or a sentimental memory. In 'O ma patrie ...', he qualifies his escapist, sentimental description of nature as a betrayal of his *patrie*:

> O ma patrie pardonne-moi, ce soir mon coeur rêvait sur l'eau
> du fleuve, je n'ai pu oublier tout à fait mon coeur d'enfant
> Lorsque les péniches défilent lourdement à contre-flot
> je fonds en douceur, je ne sais que me garder la tête au vent
> comme un marin qui se souvient, je ne sais que tirer sur l'ancre
> (*CGN* 144)

'Complies'[68] features a similar reaction against the impulse to indulge in descriptions of the joys and splendours of nature. Here, Masson describes the ease with which he could give in to a pantheistic love of nature:

> Il serait si bon de se laisser prendre au lent ressac des armoises
> d'écouter l'étang ressembler ses vases sous le ventre d'un héron
> et centurion soudain de trouver le coeur de Christ au bout de la
> lance frêle d'une avoine!
> Je n'ai pas grand geste à faire: une poussée du corps et je suis
> bois ou je suis lande
> aimant de mille roseaux, de mille ramures,
> Un tressaut de mon coeur et mon sang se couronnerait de la joie
> des saponaires et des lavandes (Moulin, p. 130)

What prevents him from continuing in this vein is that he cannot help but see the suffering of France reflected in his surroundings: 'Mais je vois la liberté dans les clairières qui pleure une gueuse au pied' (ibid., p.130). By the same token, Masson warns the springtime against displaying its natural beauty at a time when the French countryside is scene to acts of inhumanity and treachery:

> Printemps prends garde de fleurir, trop de beauté nous serait crime
> dis aux oiseaux qu'on ne chante pas à l'heure où dans nos campagnes
> nos frères sont bétail qu'on vend, à l'heure où tant de traîtres miment
> la Patrie, miment l'honneur, miment la faim de ceux qu'ils affament.
> (*LNM* 34-5)

Masson's rejection of impertinent descriptions of nature is echoed by Audisio in a poem entitled 'La Nature'. Like Masson, Audisio is convinced that the tune of a poet's portrayal of nature must be called by the violence of the time:

> J'entendais les cigales
> Et les cris des enfants
> Donner le la de la Nature
> Quel vieux son d'olifan
> Resurgi des littératures
> Clamait: tout m'est égal? (*PLN* 131)

Both Audisio and Masson clearly believe that the beauty of France's natural heritage is entirely dependent upon the way that people behave and are treated within that heritage.

So, too, does Jean Tardieu. In 'France retrouvée', Tardieu imagines re-discovering his true *patrie* and discovering with it the natural pleasures of the French countryside. He writes:

> (...) comme un évadé sur le seuil ébloui
> je touche avec des yeux avec des mains tremblantes
> cette terre et ce ciel qui n'ont jamais trahi. (*JP* 107)

Similarly, in 'Le paysage', the reinstated, ideal France of the future is described as a land where 'il y aura de nouveau des arbres, des pierres, des fleuves' (*JP* 94), and where people will again take pleasure in their natural surroundings: 'Tu longeras un mur: il te répondra gentiment. Tu prendras une branche, elle te dira "Je t'aime", tu pourras la serrer sur ton coeur' (*JP* 94). *Le pays légal* is marked by the lack of such harmony. Alienated from his natural surroundings, Tardieu describes the wind as a cruel accomplice of the inhumanity enacted in France:

> Maintenant il ne sait que siffler aux serrures,
> glaçant comme un couteau le cou des prisonniers
> et refoulant les cris dans les pauvres figures
> pour nourrir le silence et la nuit des cités. (*JP* 97)

'Le paysage' of the changed France is one in which 'tous les arbres sont abattus, les pierres noircissent et s'effritent, les fleuves sont des cloaques infâmes' (*JP* 93). For Tardieu, the physical countryside of *le pays légal* reflects the alien violence that had spread throughout France:

> La lèpre avait rongé ce grand visage d'arbres
> les chemins étaient noirs comme une bouche en sang;
> comme un regard aveugle
> les yeux de notre ciel étaient devenus vides (*JP* 103)

This is because the natural heritage of France is not something that exists independently of man. Tardieu explains this clearly at the beginning of 'Le paysage', when he writes: 'Non, la terre n'est pas couverte d'arbres, de pierres, de fleuves: elle est couverte d'hommes' (*JP* 107). Pétain assures the French people that 'la terre ne ment pas'; similarly, Tardieu insists that France's natural surroundings 'n'ont jamais trahi'. However, Tardieu's perception and descriptions of these natural surroundings are coloured entirely by the treacherous acts of inhumanity perpetrated on the soil of France, and even - betrayal indeed - in the name of that soil.

In Seghers's work, the violence of the time is similarly reflected in descriptions of nature. In 'Carré blanc', for example, the summer season is said to be assassinated and bloodstained along with its martyrs. Seghers asks:

L'été qu'on assassine
est-il vif, est-il mort?
(...)
L'été qui sent la pierre
Et le silence aussi
Les amis qu'on enterre
Où sont-ils? O soucis
Le soleil, la saison
Sont de sang inondés (*FA* 14)

In 'Août', there is the same idea of being unable to dissociate the summer season from the butchery that takes place in it. The epigraph reads: 'Pour le mois d'Août qui est placé sous le signe du Lion. Il pue' (*FA* 18). This sets the tone for the poem, where Seghers's fury at the killings is expressed through the brutal images that describe the summer. Arriving 'sous le signe de la charogne' (*FA* 18), this 'bel été' is a 'chien de sang couvert de tiques' (*FA* 19). Similarly, in 'Octobre', images of autumn are redolent of the Châteaubriant executions: in this particular autumn, 'la vendange est faite dans le sang' (*DP* 9).

Emmanuel was no more able than these other poets to perceive the physical territory of France in isolation from what was happening at the time under its dominion. In *Autobiographies,* he remembers sensing that the Occupation had changed the aspect of the 'vastes campagnes fidèles' of France (p. 263). He writes: 'je ne pouvais contempler un nuage, un pin sur la colline, un toit de briques fanées, sans qu'ils devinssent les symboles d'un ordre maintenant profané par le mensonge' (p. 263).

The misuse of the French soil, as Emmanuel saw it, became more and more flagrant as the war progressed. In 'Vercors', Emmanuel tries to express what he felt after a visit to the site of one of the worst massacres in the history of the Resistance. He refers directly to the disgrace of the earth:

(...) Que mon regard
sur tes stigmates verse une huile tendre, ô Terre!
Ici le sol dégorge encor le sang des morts,
le coeur frissonne à chaque levée brune (...) (*TP* 92)

In 'Près de la fosse', a mass grave discovered at the Vercors is described as 'un crime dont la terre est encore poissée' (*TP* 96).[69]

For Resistance poets, 'la terre de France' was clearly no eternal guarantor of the *patrie*. Yet they continued to use the symbols of 'la terre et les morts' and images of France's natural heritage in their defence of *le pays réel*. There are two main reasons for this. First, the freeing of French territory was the necessary precondition for restoring humanitarian values to France. In extolling this territory, poets exalted the values for which it stood. Second, it is typical of Resistance poets that they should reclaim, and use for their own ends, the language and imagery used by Vichy. So 'la terre et les morts' - keywords in the lexicon of right-wing patriotism - resurface in Resistance poetry as a direct challenge to the view of the *patrie* that they traditionally denote. It is significant in this respect that the new 'morts terriens' celebrated by Resistance poets are Resisters who died combating Nazi ideology in the name of an ideal, humanitarian *patrie*.

In a letter written just before his execution, Jacques Decour said: 'Je me considère comme une feuille qui tombe de l'arbre pour faire du terreau. La qualité du terreau dépendra de celle des feuilles.'[70] This idea, that Resisters feed and fertilize the soil of France, is often to be found in Resistance poetry. The dead, it is claimed, will be reborn in the natural heritage of France. Masson tells those imprisoned in Nazi camps that 'Lorsqu'on tue vos corps vous revivez dans les fleurs de l'été' (*LNM* 15). To Georges Politizer he writes:

> Tu renaîtras au gré de tes amis en frondaisons vertes
> En montagnes, en prairies constellées, en jardins où l'or
> De midi chauffe le miel des calices d'été (*LNM* 45)

and to a Catholic martyr, he says: 'L'avenir l'avenir sème à poignées dans tes cheveux de mort / Le blé des temps nouveaux' (*LNM* 46). Desnos evokes the same cycle of death and rebirth in 'Le cimetière', where he predicts his own death. He gains pleasure from the thought that 'd'autres feuilles se nourriront de l'heureuse pourriture / De ce corps qui vivra, s'il le peut, cent mille ans' (*Contrée* 91). Alain Borne writes of his friends who 'sleep' beneath the seasons, saying: 'le drame de la sève monte parmi leurs os' (*Cc* 56). Rather less consoling is Seghers's reference to the dead becoming part of the soil in 'Août': 'Le blé puait le cadavre mal nourri' (*FA* 18). Aragon addresses the dead in *Brocéliande*. He writes of a soil sown with their sacrifice and

their refusal of Nazism: 'le sol arrosé de votre sacrifice / Et le refus qui féconda cette terre troublée' (p. 181). Similarly, in 'La rose et le réséda', he predicts that the blood of Resistance martyrs will irrigate the soil and prepare a new harvest:

> Et leur sang rouge ruisselle
> (...)
> Il coule il coule et se mêle
> A la terre qu'il aima
> Pour qu'à la saison nouvelle
> Mûrisse un raisin muscat (*DF* 20)

The new earth and new harvest prepared by these 'morts terriens' is obviously of a spiritual order. The land nourished by the dead is an ideal land, invested with the values that they had held and that they represent. This is told clearly in the connection, made often in Resistance poetry, between the soil fertilised by the dead and a new language prepared by the dead. In other words, 'la terre de France' is territory composed of a revitalised language, this being one of the primary values at stake in the struggle against Nazism.

Seghers's work provides a good example of the connection between French territory and the French language. Throughout Seghers's wartime poetry, a theme recurs of bread being prepared to sustain the future of France. This theme is central to 'Le pain blanc', where Seghers announces:

> Compagnons le sang qui s'écaille fait graine
> Ce n'est plus le temps des rêves, mais des moissons
> Ce n'est plus le temps des personnes, mais venu
> Pour tous
> Le temps immense du pain blanc (*FA* 21)

The grain from which the flour is milled is composed of those who died for France. It is a forbidden grain, sown by outlaws of *le pays légal*. Here, for example, Seghers addresses an outlawed Resister: 'Toi, tu semais ce qui doit naître / Tu semais le pain défendu' (*CP* 59). Young Resisters hiding out in the countryside are described as 'les épis les plus beaux / Le pain doré de la patrie' (*DP* 24). The nature of this sustenance is all-important. Comprising the dead and the values for which they died, Seghers's 'bread' gives spiritual nourishment of a linguistic order. This is highlighted in 'Fidélité', a poem commemorating Jean Bauer, who took refuge in France with his wife during the war. Seghers writes:

Est-ce bien lui
qui labourait un autre sol, la Caroline
Qui écrivait pour l'avenir un chant sacré
Lui qui semait dans chaque tête un blé vivace,
Lui qui faisait gronder la foule avec l'espoir?

Ici traqués, ils ont repris de longue haleine
le beau travail, avec les mots qui germeront
Ils sont tous deux des inconnus qui recommencent
Partout, toujours, ils pétriront le nouveau pain. (*DP* 19-20)

This new bread satisfies a spiritual hunger for a sacred, hopeful, fraternal language. Its grain is language fostered by opposition to a perceived abuse of language during the Occupation. Thus, in 'Quarante-trois', Seghers writes: 'un épi de silence aux lèvres des martyrs / Seul, sur le sol gelé, laissait tomber son grain' (*TM* 38).

The poet helps to spread such seed. In 'Les lendemains' - a poem that derives from the last words of Gabriel Péri - Seghers writes:

(...) je vais chantant
L'oubli de moi-même
Liant de mes mains
D'autres lendemains
Au grain que je sème (*DP* 32)

So for Seghers the new harvest is a harvest of words, and the new territory of France is one in which language speaks an opposition to Nazism.

The link between soil and language is often made in Resistance poetry. Aragon asks people to remember the Resisters' legacy of language;

Le sang versé ne peut longtemps se taire
Oublierez-vous d'où la récolte vint
Et le raisin des lèvres sur la terre
Et le goût noir qu'en a gardé le vin (*DF* 58)

Emmanuel makes this same connection between language and a soil enriched by the dead when he writes: 'Ces mots que nous avions plantés en notre terre / avaient grandi nourris du plus pur de nos morts' (*LGP* 96). Bérimont's 'Le temps du beau plaisir ...' describes the soil and corn of France being fed by the blood of the Châteaubriant hostages. The nourishment is spiritual and linguistic. Bérimont writes: 'Des lèvres, par milliers, sucent la terre ouverte' (*HP* 33) and, more conclusively: 'Les morts sont à nourrir la bouche des vivants' (*HP* 33). The same association of soil and language is made in 'Le boulanger ...', which commemorates the murder of a baker by the milice.

The poem ends with the line: 'Un brin d'herbe a jailli du cri de sa poitrine' (*HP* 28).

The notion of the *patrie* being a linguistic territory challenges the conventional use of 'la terre et les morts' as symbols of French patriotism, and counteracts the ethic of *Blut und Boden* espoused by some Collaborators. This will became clear in the final chapter where the nature of the Resisters' 'linguistic territory' is examined in detail.

A final token of the difference between these two concepts of the French soil can be found in the poets' portrayal of France's natural heritage as an active ingredient in the struggle against Nazism. By transforming images of nature into images of combat, Resistance poets again seize back the imagery of Pétainism, and show that their concept of French territory, unlike that of some Collaborators, was incompatible with the Nazi ideology at work within France during the Occupation.

Masson often harnesses the imagery of nature into the vocabulary of Resistance. We have already noted his rejection of the 'pure' poet's descriptions of nature; he openly commits his poem, 'Automne' to the cause of his *patrie*:

> Mots, il est temps que vous dardiez du silence se faisant vivant comme une main
> Mots aimés de ma patrie, Equité, Charité!
> Mon poème n'est pas cet amas stellaire, ce bitume refroidi où dorment des légendes
> C'est un immense coeur battant sur les terres meurtries (...) (*PI* 36)

In this poem, the autumn season is expressed in terms that are overtly militant. Masson writes: 'Voici, voici l'automne - il bruine des corolles poignardées, d'étranges fleurs de délivrance / des fougères douces aux opprimés' (*PI* 35); he describes this particular autumn as 'une hache que les héros brandiront' (*PI* 35). In 'Le printemps des camarades', nature plays an equally active part in the struggle to rehabilitate France. The comrades of the poem use flowers and seeds in what seems like a peasant uprising against the enemy's military might:

> Nous jetterons les graines à poignées dans les arsenaux, nous couvrirons les enclumes de roses rouges
> Les herses glisseront en lente armée contre les chars, le maïs poussera dans le moyeu des roues (*PI* 26)

Similarly, in 'La mare verte', it is as if every part of France's natural heritage conspires in the struggle to free France:

Amour! Amour! l'horreur n'a pu tout emporter, il m'est encor des frères libres dans les bois
des pins semblables à des flèches, des étangs où le courage s'est reflété,
Trois couleurs dorment toujours dans l'épaisseur des vers à soie
le rouge de votre sang le bleu de votre ciel le blanc de votre liberté. (*LNM* 12)

In 'Complies', Masson asks, 'Quelles mains musiciennes joueront à l'orgue des moissons / si elles n'ont fleuri blanches dans l'émeute?' (Moulin, p. 131). His descriptions of nature in the poem are infused with images of lost freedom and images of combat:

Il n'est pas un arbre de ce printemps qui n'ait le tronc pris d'une chaîne
les fers d'un esclave qu'il rejoint dans l'humus père des révoltes;
Debout il entonne sa floraison comme un hymne au sang versé de l'homme
et ses branches sont des arcs bandés vers les portes des bastilles.
Il n'est pas un châtaignier qui ne sente durcir comme des balles ses châtaignes prochaines
balles contre les balles qui couchèrent à son ombre les fusillés
(...)
il n'est pas une mouette il n'est pas un goéland sur la mer que ne rougisse la liberté (Moulin, pp. 130-31)

Aragon, too, writes of nature taking part in the Resistance. The flowers of France, being nourished by the dead, are 'Flèches fleurs qui font le geste d'échine des martyrs' (*Br* 179). Jouve announces an avenging harvest whose grain is a weapon to be used against oppression. In 'A la France', the fields produce 'un blé lourd de canons' and the harvest is 'de fraternité grise et de vengeance' (*PFJ* 44).

The fact that Resistance poets make use of 'la terre de France' as a symbol of patriotism may give the impression that, following in the footsteps of right- wing patriots in France, they regarded the *patrie* as an exclusive territory, marked by national boundaries. However, such an impression must be dispelled by any close examination of the poets' use of this traditional symbol. Far from being an exclusive territory, the soil of France represents, for Resisters, the values of freedom, justice and *fraternité*: values that override the notion of national boundaries. While right-wing patriots in France have always regarded internationalism as a threat to the *patrie*, Resisters and their Revolutionary forefathers regarded the French *patrie* as the privileged guardian of values that are universal and therefore supranational.

The final section of this chapter looks at the universal ideal of love - and particularly of fraternal love - that invests the French *patrie*.

5. A *PATRIE* INVESTED WITH LOVE. LOVE AT WAR IN THE RESISTANCE

Towards the beginning of this chapter, it was argued that one of the main alienating features of *le pays légal* was that it was a land in which the principle of love was denied. It is not surprising that so much Resistance poetry was also love poetry when we consider that the expression of love functioned, at the time, as an expression of defiance against a regime based on brutality.

Both during and after the war, Aragon took care to stress the political function of love in his wartime poetry and in his associated writings. Aragon's preoccupation with medieval French literature has already been noted. One of his main interests in the period was in its ethic of courtly love. 'La Leçon de Ribérac', which analyses the 'morale courtoise', was written largely in response to Henry de Montherlant's attack on 'La morale de Midinette'. Through this attack, Montherlant pleaded for the Nazi ideal of a virile fraternity. In opposition to this, Aragon called for a cult of woman, and dated it back to the tradition of courtly love in France.

Aragon describes 'le culte de la femme' and 'la morale de l'amour', born during the Crusades in the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine, as reactions against feudal barbarity and what he terms 'le traitement inhumain de la femme, bonne à faire des enfants et rien d'autre, telle qu'on la voit encore, quelques années avant les premiers romans, dans nos chansons de geste' (*YE* 136).[71] This new morality embraced the concepts of justice and humanism: 'Elle porta à travers l'Europe une passion de justice, le goût de la chevalerie, de la défense des faibles, de l'exaltation des hautes pensées' (*YE* 128). As it spread towards the north of France, the ethic of 'l'amour provençal' was tempered; from the fusion of northern and southern traditions there grew what Aragon terms 'la morale de France': an ethic centred around the couple. Chrétien de Troyes's character, Perceval le Gallois, was, for Aragon, an ideal example of the 'morale de France'. He embodied the principles of truth and justice and at the same time maintained the attitude that 'Un homme qui ne s'exerce pas au maniement des armes est indigne de vivre' (*YE* 135). As 'le porteur de vérité' and 'le justicier' (*YE* 135),

Perceval is 'l'incarnation la plus haute du Français, tel qu'on voudrait qu'il soit, tel qu'il est quand il est digne de ce nom' (*YE* 136). The 'morale de France' reconciles the cult of woman with the heroic mission of man, and creates an ideal of the couple as the backbone of France's 'mission de justice et de vérité' (*YE* 137).

This appraisal of the theme of courtly love complements Aragon's own treatment of love in his wartime poetry. It also underlines the nature of love celebrated by a number of Resistance poets who, as we shall see, viewed love as a moral entity, synonymous with freedom, justice and *fraternité*. Before looking at how the theme of love was presented in Resistance poetry, it is important to stress that the expression of love in the midst of wartime was no idle, escapist pursuit. At a time when the dominant ideology was one which denied the principle of love, the poets' testimonies of love were highly charged and combative.

In his preface to *Les Yeux d'Elsa*, Aragon justifies singing his love for Elsa in a collection of wartime poetry:

> Tous ceux qui d'un même blasphème nient et l'amour, et ce que j'aime, fussent-ils puissants à écraser la dernière étincelle de ce feu de France, j'élève devant eux ce petit livre de papier, cette misère des mots, ce grimoire perdu; et qu'importe ce qu'il en adviendra si, à l'heure de la plus grande haine, j'ai un instant montré à ce pays déchiré le visage resplendissant de l'amour.
> (*YE* 32)

Aragon's love poems speak of the permanence of love against a 'triste décor' (*YE* 67) of violence in France. Many of them are set within a context of suffering. In 'Elsa au miroir', for example, a typical lover's image (of a woman combing her hair) is entangled in the unhappy circumstances of France through the repetition of 'C'était au beau milieu de notre tragédie' (*DF* 31). Aragon makes clear that his expression of love for Elsa is made even more necessary by the brutal circumstances of France. Thus, in 'Une entre toutes les femmes', he writes:

> Même si c'est aux jours de la pire misère
> si les coeurs sont muets si les yeux sont déserts
> J'aurai du moins chanté que ma voix s'en brisât
> Quand d'autres d'Aélis moi j'aurai dit d'Elsa (*DF* 33)

Aragon writes not only of his own tragic love, but of love affairs from the past that were similarly marred by circumstance. His poems take up the 'same air' that Homer

addressed to a similar 'morale sourde qui n'a pas aimé' (*DF* 33); they assert the lasting nature of love in defiance of this loveless world. His love songs, and his exaltation of woman in general, counteract the brutal ethic of hatred and violence spread of Nazism, and 'cover' the sound of violence. Here, Aragon addresses a host of women:

> Servantes aux bras blancs à l'appel des tambours
> Ouvrières riant aux portes des faubourgs
>
> Princesses de musique ou passantes sans nom
> Vous êtes l'opéra qui couvre les canons (*DF* 33)

After the war, when he was able to be more explicit about the political nature of his love poetry, Aragon explained that such exaltations of womanhood were an essential part of his combat in the Resistance: 'le combat de caractère moral contre le fascisme en France allait de pair avec l'exaltation de la femme. Et de la femme que j'aimais.'[72]

Aragon is not alone in presenting the theme of love as a theme of combat. For Masson, too, love is a defence against the inhumanity of the time. Masson rejects the tradition of love poetry that is an end in itself, just as he rejected the theme of nature as a pretext for escaping the troubles of France. In 'Poème pour Paula', he parodies those who would forget the circumstances of France in their love poetry:

> Des hommes vont en troubadours, ils enchantent les châteaux sur les lents miroirs des douves
> les châtelaines aux longues hanches dorment tendrement dans leur cou (*DM* 54)

Far from shielding him in some ivory tower, Masson's love for Paula opens his eyes to the need for combat. He writes: 'Votre sang bat - oh laissez-le battre! j'entends battre l'appel aux armes sur mes remparts' (*DM* 56). His memory of *le pays réel* is kept alive in his love for Paula, and this love gives him the will to resist the new order imposed on his country:

> On peut abreuver d'infamie cette terre entre toutes les terres terre du sang vermeil ;
> Galérien je serai si dans la galère est entr-ouvé mon pays
> S'il rame sous les coups je ramerai
> Mais vivant de vous et me souvenant de vos bras où j'ai dormi sur mes paysages inviolés. (*DM* 57)

Paula incites a spirit of combat and resistance because she is the main intercessor between Masson and his *patrie*: 'mon amour où me vient ma patrie' (*LNM* 13); 'Ma patrie c'est vous où ma patrie respire' (*DM* 57). Through his love for her, he is able to

glimpse an image of his homeland. In 'La mare verte', he writes:

> vos yeux me sont périscope par-dessus les frondaisons
> et je monte, je monte -
> si haut soit le mur j'ai regard sur ma patrie (*LNM* 12)

The image he is given is of a permanent *fraternité* and heroism that he identifies with the France of old:

> Je vois ses villes ses rues qu'au temps d'hier
> je vois à la table de l'amitié me garder ma place mes amis
> je vois ses fermes, ses canaux, ses ports, ses bergeries
> ses héros sur l'autel du sacrifice gravement déposer leur vie (*LNM* 12)

The act of naming Paula, and expressing love for her, is Masson's act of faith in the persistence of his *patrie*. In 'Le nom', he writes:

> Paula je le porte à mes lèvres comme le voile de Véronique
> Paula c'est la fièvre de sang qui vêt le patriote à l'agonie
> C'est l'oiseau qui sur le soleil tombé chaque soir proclame la survie (*PI* 12)

His love therefore acts as a bulwark against despair:

> Dans ses yeux tous ces jours de tyrannie
> auprès des martyrs en croix je voyais fleurir l'aubépine des printemps à naître
> et toujours la victoire était à côté de moi. (*PI* 15)

Contrast this with 'Août 1942'. Written in Paula's absence, this poem tells only of Masson's despair and awareness of lost freedom:

> O mon amie j'ai vécu à vous attendre en aride pays
> me voulant à pente de ciel où nos routes se croisèrent
> Mais sans cesse déjeté, roulé sur de terribles grèves
> où la liberté pansait d'ajoncs une profonde entaille à son côté. (*PI* 30)

Without Paula, Masson is without fight and without faith: 'Mes armes et mon Dieu en pays loin dormaient dans votre épaule' (*PI* 31). United once more with Paula, he claims that 'j'ai senti s'épancher en moi les fontaines fraternelles / et mon coeur a repris sa place à bord de la caravelle de liberté' (*PI* 32).

Like Aragon and Masson, Eluard makes love into a potent weapon by celebrating it in the midst of war and inhumanity. The title of the 'Sept poèmes d'amour en guerre' is significant. Love is at war to the same extent as it is affected by war. Eluard used the following lines from Aragon's *Le Musée Grévin* as an epigraph for his wartime love poems: 'J'écris dans ce pays où l'on parque les hommes / Dans l'ordure et la soif le silence et la faim' (*MG* 24). His expression of love is signalled as a means

of counteracting the spiritual impoverishment of his country; within his writings, 'La revanche d'amour rayonne' (*ARA; OC* I 1271).

Like Aragon, Eluard calls upon an ideal of womanhood to defend against what he terms 'la morale de fin du monde / Des oppresseurs' (*AD; OC* I 1227). Woman is hailed as a saviour; she is 'comme une armure contre le désert' and 'comme une armure contre l'injustice' (*ARA; OC* I 1263).

For Resistance poets, the values embodied in the love that they express - either a love addressed to someone in particular or a general ethic of love - are inseparable from those of *le pays réel.* They are therefore implicitly a part of it, even when, as in the excerpts that follow, no direct reference is made to France or to the *patrie.* Love in this particular war was necessarily at war with the attitudes that helped fashion *le pays légal.*

A good example of the theme of love being used as one of combat can be found in Eluard's 'Couvre-feu'. Here, Eluard skilfully transforms a tone of resignation and defeatism, induced by the repetition of 'Que voulez-vous', into a final, defiant message of hope, with the words: 'Que voulez-vous nous nous sommes aimés' (*PV; OC* I 1108). In this final line, resignation gives way to volition. The act of uniting in love has been willed against all the odds. It is therefore a subversive act. Often, an ideal of fraternal love is presented as a weapon capable of combating a cult of violence and hatred. In response to the sinister voice of the Collaboration, referred to in '"Un petit nombre d'intellectuels français s'est mis au service de l'ennemi"', Eluard makes this fraternal plea: 'Mais voici que l'heure est venue / De s'aimer et de s'unir / Pour les vaincre et les punir' (*ARA; OC* I 1255). By the same token, 'la nuit où nous nous unissons / Dans une lutte faible et folle' is presented as a direct foil to 'la nuit qui nous fait injure / La nuit où se creuse le lit / vide de la solitude' (*OC* I 1184). In 'On te menace', the threat to physical and spiritual life described in the first stanza, is followed by an expression of fraternal love and of a general love for life. Through the repetition of 'pourtant', this love is presented as something capable of combating the violence of the time:

Pourtant tu aimes tes amis
Ta femme et le chant du matin
Pourtant tu prends le bon vin
Pour du bon pain
(...)
Amis amour sont réunis
Nos désirs gagneront sur nous (*ARA; OC* I 1258)

In such poems, the Resistance struggle is envisaged as one aimed against the ideas of chauvinistic hatred that underlay Nazism and threatened the ethic of love within France. Eluard's 'Le même jour pour tous' makes it clear that hatred is unacceptable to him, that he considers the Occupier guilty of engendering this hatred, and that his struggle is directed against 'la haine / Et ceux qui me l'ont inspirée' (*ARA; OC* I 1263). In 'A l'échelle humaine', Eluard writes that the combat of the Resistance fighter, Colonel Fabien, was levelled 'Contre l'idée d'ennemi' (*ARA; OC* I 1272). Eluard continues this battle when he recaptures Fabien's expansive, combative love:

(...) il avait répété
Je t'aime sur tous les tons
A sa mère à sa gardienne
A sa complice à son alliée
A la vie (*ARA; OC* I 1272)

Emmanuel makes similar reference to the impotence of the enemy's hatred in the face of an immense, fraternal love. He writes:

O bourreaux, j'ai pitié de vos peines ... L'Enfer
ne connaît point labeur égal à votre haine
(...) Que pouvez-vous, haineux désespérés
contre l'amour de vos victimes? (*LGP* 125)

Again, in Masson's 'Prose de triomphe', it is implied that the main combat in this war is against forces of death, violence and hatred. The 'arms' of this combat are no more warlike than a persistent belief in certain life-giving values. Love is used as such a weapon:

Nos mains faites pour le fusil nourrirent l'abeille et l'amour
Nous aimions comme vous regarder les oiseaux
et chaque automne espérant que le printemps allait chanter
nous semions la tendresse de nos coeurs.
Si nous avons fait la guerre, si nous avons fait la guerre
Frères ce ne fut qu'en la détestant,
Entourés chacun de quatre murs de mort
Nous n'avions pas oublié la vie. (*LNM* 67-8)

For these poets, the principle of love was an essential part of the *patrie* that had to be defended against the hatred and inhumanity that prevailed within *le pays légal*. The ideal for which people fought and died was, according to Eluard, simply to be able to live in an atmosphere of justice and happiness, where love could survive and radiate outwards. He asks:

> Que voulait-il ce mort un peu manger et boire
> Aimer rêver et rire sous un ciel clément
> Dans la souveraine inégalité
> Et dans l'herbe fraîche et fleurie d'aurore
> Etre ce couple qui s'aimait sans y penser
> Etre ce couple lourd de ventre et de plaisir
> Dévoré par l'amour et qui chante très haut
> Nous sommes la lumière et notre coeur rayonne
> Nous sommes sur la terre et nous en profitons (*ARA; OC* I 1260)

The ideal world that Eluard imagines for the future is a world with 'l'amour brillant en plein jour' (*LT; OC* I 1221); it is a place assuaged of hatred, 'Où l'on peut parler aux femmes' (*AD; OC* I 1230). In speaking of woman in the ways we have seen, and in expressing what Aragon terms 'Le grand amour qui vaut qu'on meure et vive' (*DF* 57), Resistance poets defended their *pays réel* against disfigurement by the dominant themes of 'Sang, volupté et mort', and created an image of their ideal *patrie*.

It is significant that the love celebrated in Resistance poetry is rarely an exclusive love, played out within a couple. Rather, love is presented as an ethic that embraces the concepts, dear to the Republican *patrie*, of freedom, justice and *fraternité*.

Eluard's 'Liberté' is the best-known example of the identification of love and freedom. The inspired, last-minute substitution of the word 'liberté' for the name 'Nusch' has become proverbial. Eluard explains it in 'La Poésie de circonstance' written after the war: 'la femme que j'aimais incarnait un désir plus grand qu'elle. Je la confondais avec mon aspiration la plus sublime' (*OC* II 941). For Masson, Paula represents the same desire for freedom. He writes: 'Quand vous marchez c'est la transhumance de la liberté sur les chemins' (*PI* 12). So clear is the connection between Paula and freedom that her name becomes a byword for freedom and for hope, and a source of inspiration for the oppressed:

Entre les syllabes s'y moud le blé; elles se chargent à l'automne de ruisseaux où viennent boire tous les altérés
Tous les opprimés y reposent à longs sommeils égaux
Tous les peuples à genoux y brisent leurs épées. (*PI* 12)

Social justice, as well as freedom, is an important aspect of the love celebrated here. Just as Paula's name signifies freedom for Masson, so the name of his mother is haven to an ideal of justice. In 'Le nom', he addresses his mother with the words: 'la Justice dont tu m'as appris à prononcer le nom / prend ton nom comme asile' (*PI* 16). His love for Paula makes him acutely aware of the injustice of the time. In 'Poème pour Paula', he describes himself nestling into his lover's arms and hearing, in her heart-beat, the echo of centuries of injustice, reiterated in the present:

Le proscrit lutte et saigne dans votre épaule. J'entends l'Inquisition dresser son gibet sur les reins de l'aube
J'entends l'Ordre faire un hochet de sang, de sang tacher sa robe.
J'entends tout ce qui souffre, tout ce qu'on frappe, l'enfant avec le vieillard, le captif avec l'aède. (*DM* 55)

In his excellent book on love and commitment in Eluard's poetry, Pantanella stresses Eluard's belief that love could exist and last only when the establishment of strict social justice gave it the correct political backdrop. He describes Eluard's thinking in his way: 'Il doit y avoir une politique de l'amour, une politique qui fasse que l'amour puisse enfin avoir ses chances de survie, de prolongement' (p. 115). In Eluard's poetry, as we have seen, the generalised figure of womankind is like an armour against injustice. Similarly, the Resistance martyr celebrated in 'Le poème hostile' is said to have died so that others could live out his ideal of being able to love, dream and laugh 'sous un ciel clément / Dans la souveraine inégalité' (*ARA; OC* I 1260). In his post-face to *Paul Eluard,* Marcenac very appropriately included one of the *Lettres de fusillés;* Eluard could well have addressed these words to Nusch:

> (...) il n'y a pas que nous et notre amour au monde; il y a toute une vie qui peut faire heureux ou malheureux nous et les autres et c'est pour ce bonheur-là, plus grand que le nôtre mais le contenant, que je suis parti. (p. 154)

For Eluard, the love shared by a couple is never self-fulfilling; it is a contagious love, consummated in giving others the desire to realise the conditions necessary for love to last. Thus, he writes:

Nous voulons et je dis je veux
Je dis tu veux et nous voulons
Que la lumière perpétue
Des couples cuirassés d'audace
Parce que leurs yeux se font face
Et qu'ils ont leur but dans la vie des autres (*OC* I 1185)

It is often the case in Resistance poetry that the love of two people opens out into a wider concept, of fraternal love. In Eluard's words again:

parce que nous nous aimons
nous voulons libérer les autres
De leur solitude glacée (*OC* I 1185)

Aragon, too, considers love as something other than 'un égoïsme à deux'.[73] In 'Arma virumque cano', he says to Elsa: 'C'est toi qui me rends cet univers sensible qui donne sens en moi aux sentiments humains' (*YE* 32). In 'La Nuit de Dunkerque', Aragon's response to his fellow soldiers' isolation is to cry out his own physical, erotic love for the woman who links him firmly with the world. He writes:

Je crierai je crierai Ta lèvre est la verre où
J'ai bu le long amour ainsi que du vin rouge
Le lierre de tes bras à ce monde me lie (*YE* 40)

Masson's love for Paula is similarly expansive. We have already seen how in Paula's absence, Masson feels cut off from the rest of humanity; he is left, as he says, 'suppliant une forme en robe noire qu'il appelait solitude' (*PI* 29). His urge to *fraternité* is reawakened by her return, when 'De nouveau j'ai senti s'épancher en moi les fontaines fraternelles' (*PI* 32). His love for Paula is 'étoilé de camarades' (*PI* 45): a love capable of founding a community built on freedom and *fraternité*. In 'Poème pour Paula', he announces the creation of this settlement: 'Je vous aime. De vos mains sur mes mains glissent les ciments d'une cité / où l'homme est frère de l'homme et berce dans le froment la liberté' (*PI* 57).

The ideal *patrie* for Resistance poets is such a place as Masson describes. Built on what Eluard calls 'la raison de l'amour' (*OC* I 1183) - an ethic that encapsulates the universal ideals of freedom, justice and *fraternité* - the French *patrie* is a *patrie* of humanity that stretches far beyond the national boundaries of France.

The Resistance (and Revolutionary) ideal of France as a universal *fraternité* contrasts markedly with the concept that Vichy had of *fraternité* within France. In 'La

Politique sociale de l'avenir', Pétain explains Vichy's redefinition of the tripartite motif of the French Revolution. Pétain's description of *fraternité* illustrates the basic difference between his ideal and that of Revolutionary Resisters: 'la "Fraternité" est un idéal magnifique, mais (...) dans l'état de nature où nous voici retombés, il ne saurait y avoir de fraternité véritable qu'à l'intérieur de ces groupes naturels que sont la famille, la cité, la Patrie' (p. 170). For Pétain, *fraternité* signifies membership of an exclusive national territory. Within collaborationist circles, any form of internationalism, bar collaboration within the New Europe, was anathema. Patriotism within *le pays légal* therefore precluded universal, supranatural loyalties: loyalties that were at the very heart of the Resistance concept of *patrie*.

V CONCLUSION. FRANCE : A *PATRIE* OF HUMANITY

In Chapter I it was argued that Resistance poets regarded Nazism not just as a threat to France, but as a moral, ideological threat that swept through national boundaries. In this chapter, we have seen that the poets responded to this threat by defending values that are universal as well as national. In the words of Masson:

> Il n'y a pas que cette patrie à délivrer
> il y a mille patries à faire, tout un puissant kilométrage de liens à briser
> tous les lieux, et tous les climats à faire chanter! (*LNM* 90)

and of Marcenac: 'Nous défendions un bien commun à tous les hommes' (*CF* 60). These values were defended in the name of a country that had been their guarantor since the time of the Revolution.

Patriotism, for Resistance poets, was not the chauvinism implied by Péret and others in their criticisms. The French *patrie* represented a generous, universal ideal that they voiced in order to combat the universal threat to humanity posed by Nazism. Aragon writes:

> Ma maison n'est pas que ce toit sur ma tête, mais aussi
> cette forêt de mon peuple, ce ciel au-dessus de l'humanité (*EEP* 103)

and Seghers:

> Ecoute, je ne chante pas pour mon village
> Mais pour l'Europe et pour le monde
> (...)
> J'écris cela pour les hommes et pour les femmes de demain (*CP* 26)

In an editorial entitled 'Une seule patrie', Fouchet stresses that the Allies were all fighting for the same *patrie* or the same civilisation: 'Nous nous battons pour une civilisation. Nous nous battons ensemble, Français, Américains, Anglais, pour une même civilisation' (*Fontaine*, No. 25, novembre 1942, p. 28). To defend the French patrie was to defend, as Emile Simon puts it, 'La Patrie de l'humain'.[74]

Péret insists in *Le Déshonneur des poètes* that 'la poésie n'a pas de patrie puisqu'elle est de tous les temps et de tous les lieux' (p. 87). For Resistance poets, the ideal French *patrie* was clearly just as timeless and supranational as Péret's ideal of poetry.

The defence of the French *patrie* was essentially a defence of humanity. Emmanuel describes his chosen *patrie* as 'la plus humaine race d'hommes' (*LGP* 96). Marcenac writes:

> Nos soldats sont ceux des hommes
> Ils disent vie bonheur tendresse
> Dans toutes les langues du monde (*CF* 51)

He announces not just the victory of France in 'Le ciel des fusillés', but the advent of a 'nouvelle saison des hommes' (*CF* 35).

The poets' voicing of the French *patrie* was an expression of certain values that were held to be at risk in the war against Nazism. The most important of these values was a certain concept of humanity itself. The following chapter examines how Resistance poets fought, in the words of Marcenac, 'Pour que l'homme reste un homme / Et pour que ce nom soit l'honneur de tous' (*CF* 51).

NOTES

1. *Entretiens avec Francis Crémieux*, p. 58.
2. Péret uses the word 'myth' to refer to the expression of a popular aspiration. This is discussed further on in the chapter, p. 94.
3. In J. Pierre (ed.), *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives 1922-1939*, vol. 1, p.50.
4. Ibid, p. 395.
5. Ibid, p. 395.

6. Charles Maurras used these terms throughout *Au signe de flore* to distinguish between the actual *patrie* and the ideal *patrie* with which it was at odds. In Maurras's usage, 'le pays légal' denoted the defunct liberalism of the Third Republic, and 'le pays réel' denoted the authoritarian, monarchist ideal that he wished to have restored in France. Edith Thomas adopted Maurras's terms in a letter written in Paris, in July 1940, to Louis Parrot, who was living in the unoccupied, southern zone. Thomas writes: 'Donnez-moi des nouvelles du "pays réel". Vous voyez, je me mets à "parler Maurras", comme l'amiral Darlan "agit français".' (in L. Scheler, *La Grande espérance des poètes*, p. 33.)

7. See, for example, H.R. Kedward, *Fascism in Western Europe 1900-1945;* E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism;* Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: the First Wave 1924-1933.*

8. A typical example is Montandon's article 'Pour sortir du chaos ethnique', published in *La Gerbe,* 8 juillet 1943, p. 5. The same issue of *La Gerbe* announces the recent publication of Montandon's *Comment reconnaître le Juif.*

9. The material used in this section is drawn from E.H. Carr, *Nationalism and After;* Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism;* B.C. Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism. New Realities and Old Myths;* R. Soucy, *Fascism in France. The Case of Maurice Barrès;* H. Tint, *The Decline of French Patriotism 1870-1940.*

10. Interestingly, this was reproduced just after the Liberation in *L'Eternelle revue* (Nouvelle série) No. 1, décembre 1944, p. 1.

11. *Paroles aux Français,* p. 129.

12. J. de Broglie, 'Les "Attentistes", *Aujourd'hui,* 9 septembre 1942, pp. 1-2.

13. *Je suis partout,* 16 juin 1941, p. 1.

14. 'Fascisme et antifascisme', *Je suis partout,* 16 main 1942, p. 1.

15. 'Têtes de rois et antifascisme', *Aujourd'hui,* 21 janvier 1943, p. 1.

16. *Au Pilori,* 12 juin 1941, p. 4.

17. Pétain, *Paroles aux Français,* p. 91.

18. Ibid, p. x.

19. This is one of the various references to English history and culture that inform Aragon's Resistance poetry. For other examples, see 'Romance du temps qu'il fait' (*Cr* 35-7); 'Richard II Quarante' (*Cr* 50-51); 'Ballade de celui qui chanta dans les supplices' (*DF* 38). By referring to episodes from English history, Aragon pays tribute to the part played by the British allies in the fight against Nazism. Such references are also a token of the important 'internationalist' aspect of Aragon's own patriotism.

20. In 'Tradition and Myth in French Resistance poetry', p. 46.

21. Letter to Seghers, quoted by Seghers in *La Resistance et ses poètes,* Vol. I, p.82.

22. 'Paris', published under the pseudonym of Robert Barade in *L'Honneur des poètes,* p. 75.

23. Published under the pseudonym of Anne in *L'Honneur des poètes,* p. 71.

24. 'Tuileries', ibid, p. 74.

25. Jouve's 'Des catacombes' is a good example of the same idea. The poem was written just after the fall of France. In it, Jouve expresses a desolate loss of identity:

> Tout obscur et sanglant dans un repos de terre
> Mon nom n'a plus de nom, mon pas
> N'a plus d'approche et son territoire n'est pas
> Je suis seul au couloir sans respiration (*VP* 57)

26. Quoted in *Oeuvres poétiques complètes,* Vol. I, p. 281.

27. Borne's obsession with death, and particularly with the certainty of his own death, forms a dominant theme in 'Retouche à une image', 'Encore un songe', 'Fantasques' and 'Jeunes mortes' - all in his first collection of poems, *Cicatrices de songes* (1939).

28. This is at its most apparent in 'Ce visage cravaché' (*Co* 63).

29. 'A la France', in *La Patrie se fait tous les jours,* p. 41.

30. *Entretiens avec Francis Crémieux,* p. 92.

31. Towarnicki and Kedros, 'Entretien avec Aragon', p. 134.

32. The Vatican state was granted neutrality within Fascist Italy. Believing that it was important to preserve this independence, and knowing that it was entirely conditional upon the goodwill of the authorities, Pope Pius XII made no official statement to denounce the evils of fascism. The Catholic Church in France followed suit. Again this was a tactical move. The Occupiers tolerated the church for the sake of the Collaboration. The Vichy government was eager to harness the right-wing traditionalism of the Catholic church into the service of its National Revolution. Unofficially, of course, the Catholic clergy and individual believers did as much as anyone else to resist Nazism. The church's official position, however, caused widespread despair and anger amongst its followers.

33. In *Domaine français,* p. 243.

34. Ibid, p. 244.

35. In *L'Honneur des poètes II. Europe,* p. 72.

36. This is the type of myth in which Péret would go on to display a vital interest. He was particularly attracted to the primitive and Third World myths of modern Mexico. This is demonstrated in the poetry of *Air mexicain* (1952) and in his *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (1960).

37. The following examples highlight this common emphasis on language in diverse descriptions of myth. Albert Cook, a linguist, writes: 'Insofar as myth must be communicated in language, and insofar as myth - a particular myth or 'myth' in general - necessarily constitutes the central reference for statements of or about it, then myth is continuous with language' (*Myth and Language*, p. 2). The anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, writes: 'Le mythe fait partie intégrante de la langue; c'est par la parole qu'on le connaît, il relève du discours' (*Anthropologie structurale,* p. 230). Mircea Eliade, in his study of religious myth, writes: 'Le mythe *raconte* une histoire sacrée; il *relate* un événement qui a eu lieu dans le temps primordial. (...) En somme, les mythes *décrivent* les diverses et parfois dramatiques irruptions du sacré (ou du "sur-naturel") dans le Monde' (my italics, *Aspects du mythe,* p. 14). In 'Freud et la mythologie', Didier Anzieu

describes myth as a type of discourse, although he goes on to say that 'A la différence des autres discours il est indépendant des langues particulières qui assurent sa transmission' (p. 124). Henry Tudor, a political historian, uses as one of his defining characteristics of myth the fact that 'a myth is always a story, a narrative of events in dramatic form' (*Political Myth,* p. 137). Barthes qualifies myth as utterance: 'le mythe est une parole' (*Mythologies,* p. 193); he describes myth as Saussure describes language, in terms of a semiological system.

38. 'Petite lettre sur les mythes', *Oeuvres,* Vol. I, pp. 963-4.

39. Ibid, p. 965.

40. This poem is one of many written during the Resistance which evoke the related symbols of the French soil and the dead. 'La terre et les morts' were, as we have seen, bywords of right-wing nationalism in France. The subversion of these traditional, Barrèsian, symbols of French patriotism in Resistance poetry is illustrated in a later part of the chapter (pp. 129 - 142).

41. Aragon was not alone in his attempt to repatriate Vercingétorix. In September 1942, the clandestine paper *Libérer et fédérer* attacked Pétain's 'Légion' for celebrating its second anniversary at Gergovie, which Vercingétorix had defended against Caesar in 52 B.C. The paper claimed that 'Vercingétorix est le héros de la Résistance' (p. 1).

42. Many of Eluard's Resistance poems contain references to dreams that provide a foil to reality. In 'On te menace', for example, a sleeper's dreams contrast markedly with the real dangers described by Eluard in the first stanza (*ARA; OC* I 1258). In 'Faire vivre', Eluard praises Resisters for having kept alive a vanquished ideal through their dreams, hopes and beliefs (*ARA; OC* I 1274-5). This can be seen as a natural re-emergence of Eluard's Surrealism: only in dreams can a better reality surface. It is, at the same time, a sure token of the idealist nature of *le pays réel* to which he aspires.

43. Aragon parodies this process, along with Vichy's monarchism, in *Le Musée Grévin:*

> C'est Vichy, c'est l'Hôtel du Parc ...
> On a des courtisans ... Ah, on
> Se croit prédestiné, monarque,
> Vercingétorix, Jeanne d'Arc!
> Et puis on n'est que MacMahon ... (p. 22)

(In 1877, MacMahon led the army that defeated the Communards. He succeeded Thiers as President of the French Republic in 1873. After an attempted coup d'état in May 1879, he was forced to give in to the Republican majority in the Chamber, and resign.)

44. Quoted in M. Cotta, *La Collaboration,* p. 170.

45. *L'Appel,* 7 mai 1942, p. 3.

46. Ibid, p. 3.

47. Adereth points out, in *Aragon.The Resistance Poems,* that 'les ponts de Cé' refers to the four bridges across which the Gauls retreated in 51 B.C. and the French Army in 1940 (p. 18).

48. Bara was a hero of the Republican army, who died after shouting 'Vive la République!' instead of the cry demanded by his captors of 'Vive le roi!'.

49. Jean-Baptiste Kléber was a celebrated Revolutionary general, killed by the Mameluk fanatic, Suleyman.

50. The battle to wrench the symbol of Joan of Arc from the hands of extreme right-wing nationalists is still continuing in France. On 1 May 1988, Jean-Marie le Pen brought the saint's day forward to coincide with the 'Fête du travail', in what has been described as 'a perfect act of National Socialism' (*The Guardian*, 3 May 1988, p. 9).

    Le Pen uses Joan of Arc as the symbolic forerunner of his own brand of French nationalism. Joan is remembered by Le Pen's followers for having removed from French territory an unwelcome foreign presence. In an article entitled 'Le Rapt de Jeanne d'Arc' (*Le Monde*, 4 mai 1988, p. 2), Pierre Besnard voices his strong objection to Le Pen's use of the 'national symbol' of Joan:

> Jeanne d'Arc est un personnage emblématique, un symbole nationale. (...) Nous aimons sa fierté, nous aimons à travers elle une certaine idée de la France éprise de liberté et de fraternité (...) Et l'on voudrait nous faire croire, à nous qui sommes aussi pétris de cette histoire de France, (...) qu'elle est, qu'elle n'est, que l'expression de la haine et du rejet, le symbole d'une France frileuse et égoïste, pour qui la chasse aux étrangers, le racisme et la terreur tiennent lieu de foi et l'idéal! (...) Ne laissons pas détruire nos symboles historiques et nationaux, ne laissons pas détourner notre héroïne nationale.

    Evidently the *patrie* is still an ambivalent concept in France, and its emblems still in need of definition.

51. The title of an important anthology of Resistance writings, published in 1947.

52. *André Frénaud,* p. 77.

53. These lists have been reproduced in *Europe,* pp. 281-307.

54. This phrase is the title of an article by Camille Mauclair, published in *L'Appel,* 25 juin 1942, p. 2.

55. C. Mauclair, 'Droits et devoirs du talent', *La Gerbe,* 14 janvier 1943, p. 6.

56. *Comoedia,* 12 juillet 1941, p. 1.

57. This prize was announced along with its conditions in *La Gerbe,* 28 août 1941, p. 2.

58. *Le Français d'Europe.* Quoted in Loiseaux, p. 84.

59. Quoted in Loiseaux, p. 103.

60. *Mémoires d'un fasciste.* Quoted in Loiseaux, p. 111.

61. Quoted in Seghers, *La Résistance et ses poètes,* Vol. I, p. 104.

62. Published in *Les Lettres françaises,* No. 1, septembre 1942, p. 1.

63. Published under the pseudonym of Daniel Trévoux in *L'Honneur des poètes II. Europe,* p. 90.

64. R. Paxton, Vichy France. *Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944,* p. 201.

65. This drain on French resources during the Occupation is referred to by Audisio with a similar touch of humour:

> Jamais nul d'entre vous ne saura qui tient la clé:
> Vous croyez au printemps, l'oeuf est troué.
> Jamais nul d'entre vous n'entendra le chant du blé:
> Nous sommes bien trop occupés. (*PLN* 44)

66. Quoted in M. Cotta, *La Collaboration,* p. 143.

67. Quoted in Cotta, pp. 142-3.

68. 'Complies' was first published in *Pour les quatre saisons* (1942) and then in *Fontaine* (No. 24, octobre 1942) under the title 'Le Printemps'. The version used here is the one that is reprinted in C. Moulin, *Loys Masson.* The page references below are to this work.

69. This poem is analysed in detail in Chapter IV (pp.277-82).

70. Quoted in Gaucheron, *La Poésie, la résistance,* pp. 180-81.

71. There is an obvious irony here. The 'inhuman' treatment of women which Aragon saw reflected in the 'chansons de geste' was re-enacted in Vichy's policy towards women. For Pétain and his government, a woman was first and foremost a breeder. This was mainly because the birthrate in France had fallen behind that of other important European countries. Vichy policies were geared towards keeping women in the home. It became educational policy to fail more girls than boys in the Baccalauréat; housecraft courses were compulsory for girls, and courses were created to prepare women in the skills of childcare and domestic science. (W.D. Halls, *The Youth of Vichy France,* pp. 42-4 and *passim.*) Young, unmarried women received State dowries if they pledged not to take up employment. Local businesses were encouraged to sack their women employees married to demobilised soldiers - even when the husband was unemployed and the family dependent on the woman's wages. There was conscious discrimination against all working women, whose wages fell well behind those of their male counterparts. (R. Aron, *Histoire de Vichy 1940-1944,* Vol. I, p. 330).

    Vichy, then, contributed to the 'morale de l'homme au-dessus de la femme' that Aragon saw as a vital part of Nazism (*Entretiens avec Francis Crémieux*, p. 61).

72. *Entretiens avec Francis Crémieux,* p. 61.

73. In 'La Politique dans l'oeuvre d'Aragon', P. Fourgeaud writes that 'Aragon considère l'amour autrement que comme un égoïsme à deux' (p. 69). He takes as proof of this the fact that one of the underlying themes of Aragon's wartime love poetry is that 'un monde torturé torture et divise des êtres' (p. 69).

74. This is the title of a book by Emile Simon published in 1948, in which he argues that French culture is characterised by its humanism. Simon writes in one essay, written in 1940, that 'La civilisation française place l'homme au centre des choses' (p. 12). This is why, he argues, 'nous ne pouvons perdre confiance en la France et en sa capacité de se sauver, et non pas seule, mais peut-être toute l'Europe avec elle' (p. 21).

CHAPTER THREE

THE DEFENCE OF MAN IN RESISTANCE POETRY

INTRODUCTION

The response that the Second World War has continued to provoke amongst writers and intellectuals bears witness to the fact that it is still considered as a phenomenon whose causes and effects stretch well beyond the bounds of a conventional war, based simply on profit, or territorial expansion and defence. The extent of its influence, the fury of the violence it unleashed and not least of all its introduction of genocide as a self-understood concomitant of warfare, has made it a war that is remembered most of all for having questioned assumptions about man that had previously been taken for granted.

There is little doubt that Resistance poets considered man as well as France to be threatened by Nazism. It was a threat that went deeper than the idea, horrific in itself, that the war would inevitably result in the deaths of many thousands of people. The fear of this certainly echoes through the poetry written during the phoney war period: in Audisio's 'Blessures' (*PLN*), for example, where images of the autumn of 1939 fuse with images of death, or in Frénaud's *Les Rois Mages,* which opens with an 'Epitaphe'. Instead of diminishing after peace was established between France and Germany in June 1940, the poets' fears for man intensified. The threat posed by Nazism was considered to be more than just a threat of death. In *Autobiographies,* Emmanuel describes the war as 'la catastrophe où tout l'homme était remis en question' (p. 206): it was a time, he says, when 'le sens de l'homme [se] trouva blessé dans sa plus intime certitude' (p. 207).

During the war, Resistance poets made repeated reference to man being severely tried. Gaston Baissette writes in *Poésie 43*: 'C'est une heure de crise planétaire, le

globe entier participe à l'événement qui met en question la condition humaine.'[1] In 'L'Utilisation des mythes', published in the same issue of *Poésie 43,* Emmanuel refers to a 'danger absolu qui plane sur l'homme'.[2] In 'Prélude à la diane française', Aragon asks: 'L'homme où est l'homme l'homme L'homme / Floué roué troué meurtri' (*DF* 15).

There are references to the whole of humanity as a dying race. In 'Ce visage cravaché', Alain Borne writes: 'C'en est fini des hommes, la race est morte / sépulcres avec des noms de haute cendre' (*Co* 62). In *Feuillets d'Hypnos,* Char wonders: 'Serons-nous plus tard semblables à ces cratères où les volcans ne viennent plus et où l'herbe jaunit sur sa tige?' (*FM* 125). He believed himself to be living 'au sein d'une civilisation dont le naufrage risque de ne pas laisser de trace sur l'océan de la destinée' (*FM* 96). In 'Camps de concentration', Emmanuel writes that man - all of man - is dying:

> Au fond du puits abrupt scellé par le soleil
> un peu de vase pantelante et de silence
> tout l'homme ici se meurt (...)

He imagines 'les mâts pourris du genre humain' being rent asunder (*LGP* 91), and counts himself amongst a generation of 'témoins de l'homme en son anéantissement' (*Com* 34). Tardieu asks: 'peut-être l'Homme est-il mort?' (*JP* 90), and in *Porche à la nuit des saints,* Jouve writes: 'Nous sommes les derniers d'un mourant paysage' (*VP* 77).

Just as Frénaud, in opening *Les Rois Mages* with an 'Epitaphe', evokes the idea of man redefining himself in the face of his destruction, so many Resistance poets used the deepening crisis to redefine a certain concept of man or to promote, as Emmanuel would have it, a new humanism:

> nous avons, dans le chaos actuel, tous les éléments d'un humanisme nouveau; reste à trouver l'esprit de cet humanisme, et pour tout dire, son lyrisme créateur. (*UM* 64)

In the midst of a critical chaos of values, the poets felt bound to express and so to protect what they saw as some basic truths about man. Almost inevitably, this has overtones of essentialism: the belief that there is a human essence, some fundamental,

eternally unchanging quality of humanness. The poets' words do little at times to dismiss such an impression. Emmanuel, for example, writes that 'le secret / est le même pour tous les hommes' (*Com* 29); he refers not only to 'la substance humaine' (*LGP* 71), but also to 'une seule définition de l'homme (...) qu'il faut défendre partout' (*Aut* 219) and to 'une vérité de l'homme, universelle, confondante de netteté' (*Aut* 223). Similarly, there is a definite suggestion that some privileged (if not immutable) truth about humankind is being promoted in Tardieu's use of the adjective 'vrais' in 'Le Paysage': 'les vrais hommes remonteront au grand jour' (*JP* 94), in 'O pays nommé France': 'vrais visages baissés' (*JP* 92), and in 'France retrouvée': 'des hommes vrais les mains tendues sortent de l'ombre' (*JP* 107) - or in Eluard's reference to 'Hommes réels' in 'La Victoire de Guernica' (*Cours Naturel, OC* I 814) - or in the fact that Desnos alludes to 'les hommes dignes de ce nom' (*DA* 205). As the rest of the chapter illustrates, however, the view of man put forward in Resistance poetry was itself a healthy reaction against essentialism.

Yet if Resistance poetry is almost by definition anti-essentialist, as I will argue, it still promotes a certain type of humanism. The fact that the word 'homme' is sometimes used in the poetry as a synonym of humanity (as in some of the excerpts above) is evidence in itself that the poets were concerned with something wider than a concrete collectivity of heterogeneous individuals. Emmanuel, as we have seen, refers directly to a new humanism. This suggestion of an evolution of humanity is central to a lot of the poetry that I have examined here. There is, however, nothing teleological about the evolution proposed in Resistance poetry. Resistance poets had no definite end in mind for man. Or the end that they did have in mind was an end to essentialism: an eventual, unanimous awareness of an open-endedness in everything and everyone; an understanding of the perpetual need for redefinition, change and requalification.

The ideas put forward in this chapter have often as much to do with philosophy as they have to do with poetry. Connections are there with the main philosophical theories of the time: most notably with existentialism and the theory of the absurd.

Marcenac, who taught philosophy before and after the war, insists that 'une théorie de l'homme est à la base de toute poétique'.[3] In Chapter I, I argued that a particular theory or concept of man is crucial to Resistance poetry, in so far as it constitutes the main object of the poets' commitment. This makes inevitable the philosophical underpinning of this present chapter. It is hoped that the connections which will be made between these ideas, poetry, and language, will serve as a reminder that we are dealing here with poets, not philosophers.

One of the clearest indications of this is that the poets' ideas about man in general have often to be gleaned from what they say about themselves in poems narrated in the first person singular. In their polemical writings, the poets are more readily drawn to abstract speculation and theorising. Their poetry contains ideas that are universal, but for the most part it avoids generalisations. It is only by noting certain recurrent themes, expressed most often in a happily idiosyncratic fashion, that the present reader has been able to sketch a composite picture of the idea that certain Resistance poets had about man.

In order to do this, I have focused attention here on a relatively limited number of Resistance poets. The chapter concentrates on the work of Char, Eluard, Emmanuel, Frénaud, Marcenac and Seghers (although important additional reference is made at times to Guillevic, Jouve, Ponge and Tardieu). These poets have been chosen in preference to others because of the fact they they more consistently voice ideas that are universal, and their work is therefore more conveniently examined in respect of a concept of man. Indeed, in the poetry of Emmanuel, as we shall see, the concept of man is of such central importance that it amounts to a properly worked out theme.

This chapter outlines and argues these poets' belief that Nazism was part cause, part *symptom* of the crisis faced by man. It would be misleadingly to simplify the problem to argue otherwise. It would also leave unexplained the fact that National Socialism was itself intent upon creating a new humanism from the ashes of the chaotic overturning of values which had marked the pre-war period. National Socialism was (along with Mussolini's brand of fascism) one of the first political

systems to call itself totalitarian, precisely because it aimed to encompass the whole range of human activity. It was totalitarian in so far as it intended to create at once a new type of society and a new type of man.

In *Notre avant-guerre*, Brasillach refers to the development of a type of man by fascism:

> nous avons pu voir (...) naître un type humain nouveau, aussi différencié, aussi surprenant que le héros cartésien, que l'âme sensible et encyclopédiste du dix-huitième siècle, que le "patriote" jacobin, nous avons vu naître l'homme fasciste.
> (*OC* VI 230)

One of the main Nazi ideologues, Alfred Rosenberg, said that the task of the twentieth century was 'to create a new human type out of a new life-myth'.[4] This new type would be determined primarily by race: 'The racial style of life, rooted in Mother Earth, a new German type of man is being born (...)'.[5]

This desire to create a new human type - referred to henceforward as a totalitarian man - is evidence that National Socialism was responding, in its own way, to some deep crisis that was perceived within society and within humanity.

As far as Resistance poets were concerned, the attempt to create a totalitarian man constituted in itself an immediate threat which had to be resisted. It was crucial, in their minds, to defend a certain concept of man against totalitarianism. As Seghers was to write in *La Résistance et ses poètes:*

> Alors que les Nazis donnaient à leur entreprise une allure de croisade (...) le destin de l'homme, son avenir se trouvaient mis en jeu par l'occupation étrangère. C'est de ce destin que les poètes prirent conscience. Sauver l'homme de l'humiliation, de l'avilissement et de l'écrasement devint action, réaction spontanée, écriture. (Vol. I, p. 13)

The following study examines how the idea of man that is put forward by certain Resistance poets formed a vital corrective to the concept of a totalitarian man that was being promoted by Nazism. It also examines the poets' resistance to the more general crisis facing man: a crisis of which Nazism was considered to be a symptom or manifestation.

The opening section of the chapter outlines the poets' rejection of essentialism and relates this rejection to their resistance of both *attentisme* and totalitarianism. Against the images of immobility that they use to qualify a diminished existence - that, ultimately, of the totalitarian man - the poets propose images of man breaking away from any fixed identity in a constant process of self-creation and requalification.

Nazism is often referred to in the poetry as an embodiment of the absurd: a force that promoted the basic meaninglessness of human existence. The second part of the chapter explains the more general crisis that was affecting man in terms of absurdity. It draws connections between the poets' resistance to the absurd and their resistance to Nazism.

One feature of the absurd is the idea that man, having no given meaning, or being nothing 'in himself', is wholly circumstantial. Part III examines the idea put forward in the poetry that to exist 'authentically' is first of all to accept this circumstantiality and then to set about resisting it. This resistance is shown to be a function of the relations we establish between ourselves, as individuals, and the things and events which constitute our circumstances. The poems illustrate that it is through these relations that we can forge a complementary meaningfulness for ourselves and for the world outside ourselves. In this section of the chapter, particular attention is paid to the poetry of Guillevic and Tardieu.

All of these sections stress in different ways the importance of preserving one's individuality. The fourth part of the chapter looks at the question of the relation of the individual to his or her community. It examines the theme of *fraternité* in Resistance poetry and demonstrates that this Revolutionary ideal embodies a rejection of the Nazi, totalitarian concept of man. Specific reference is made here to poems written in response to the executions of hostages at Châteaubriant, which illustrate the theme of *fraternité* being used as a theme of combat.

Part V looks at how the question of justice is approached in the poetry. Like *fraternité*, this was a political (and Revolutionary) ideal which was considered to respond to a fundamental need in man. This section of the chapter outlines how

certain Resistance poets perceived the battle against the injustices of Nazism as an externalization of a battle of conflicting tropisms that is conducted at all times within each individual. It shows how the poets warn that resistance to Nazism has to be a permanent and continual process, because of their belief that Hitlerism is, to a certain extent, inherent in man.

The short concluding section argues that the poets' defence of both France and man is inseparable from their defence of language, the subject of the final chapter of the thesis.

I RESISTING ESSENTIALISM, RESISTING TOTALITARIANISM

This part of the chapter describes the totalitarian account of man as a form of essentialism. It opens with the poets' descriptions of people in France being immobilised: petrified by fear and by an attitude of fatalism that was encouraged in France after the Armistice. It goes on to draw a connection between these descriptions of immobility and the poets' fear that, by force of the Occupation, people were being moulded, passively, into a single, collective, identity, similar to that of the totalitarian man. Against this process of petrifaction, the poets describe man breaking away constantly from any one fixed identity; they lay emphasis on man as a possibility to be attained, and stress our ability to redefine ourselves.

1. FATALISM AND IMMOBILITY

This preliminary section deals with two of the detrimental effects that the Occupation was held to have on people, both immediately and more far-reachingly. The crushing defeat of France and the inevitability of the Occupation were met for the most part with a resignation akin to fatalism. There is evidence in the poetry that fatalism - the belief that events are ordered by some inevitable necessity - was considered to pose a threat to man as well as creating a barrier to any possible resurrection of *le pays réel*. Fatalism is closely linked with essentialism: the belief that the events which fashion our existence are preordained, corresponding to the precept

that our identities are similarly immutable. Essentialism also underlies the theme of immobility which informs many poems of the Resistance period. I will suggest that the descriptions of time standing still, and of people being petrified, through which the Occupation is often transcribed in the poetry, not only portray the immobilisation of France, but give the suggestion of people being moulded into a fixed identity which threatened the authenticity of their existence.

(a) Fatalism

It would be interesting first of all to reexamine the frequent references made in Resistance poetry to the spirit of lassitude and resignation that tended to dominate Occupied France. The previous chapter listed many such examples, but confined attention to the effects that poets believed this would have on the French *patrie*. At this point, I would like to reconsider the same theme of stagnation, in the light of the danger it was assumed to constitute to man.

In the minds of many of these poets, one of the pernicious aspects of the Occupation was that along with forcing people into a dull acceptance of France's defeat, it convinced them of their own inherent impotence. In other words, the circumstances of the defeat and the Occupation served to propagate the notion that our role is passively to accept our given fate, no matter how undesirable that fate might be. A few further examples will help demonstrate this point.

Aragon describes the typical lassitude of the time:

> Qu'il m'est doux de dormir le songe de la pierre
> Le sommeil est profond qui berce les statues
> Quand le siècle est infâme à fermer les paupières
> Non-voir et non-sentir deviennent des vertus
> Chut ne m'éveille pas Baisse la voix veux-tu (*YE* 65)

Marcenac gives a searing caricature of an old Collaborator who wishes to ignore the injustices carried out around him and to live 'Ainsi que j'ai toujour vécu / Les yeux clos La tête basse' (*CF* 42). The old man curses Resisters for having disturbed the easy resignation with which he had accepted the Occupation. As he confesses, 'Je suis mort Et veux de la mort Mais pas du bruit' (*CF* 41). It is with equal virulence that

Audisio attacks what he terms 'les morts vivants' (*PLN* 169): those who become slaves in giving in to their fate:

> Tant pis pour les esclaves, tant pis
> Pour leurs yeux morts, pour leurs bras rompus
> Ils n'avaient qu'à lever leurs deux mains
> En marchant au soleil, ils n'avaient
> Des pieds aux cheveux qu'à dire non
>
> Honte à celui qui poursuit son ombre
> (...)
> Il ne dit rien, ne refuse rien,
> Il est plus mort qu'un mort bien durci. (*PLN* 167)

Not only is a fatalistic attitude pilloried in each of these examples: it is, importantly, qualified as something less than human, or as an inversion of what is human. Aragon's narrator is stone-like in his resignation, Audisio uses the metaphor of the slave to describe those who accept their fate without challenge, and both Audisio and Marcenac make parallels between a passive acceptance of fate, and death.

There are many instances in Resistance poetry in which an ethos of resignation is accused of leading to a type of existence which falls short of what Seghers terms 'la vie à hauteur d'homme' (*FA* 21). Not all of them relate so directly to the circumstances of the Occupation. In the extracts that follow there is some interplay between general references to fatalism and more explicit references to this as the result of an identifiable political situation.

In 'La gueule du loup', Marcenac dismisses fatalism. He writes: 'A d'autres la vie et le sort comme une mauvaise habitude' and qualifies other people's acceptance of their destinies as a 'lassitude coupable' (*CC* 15).

Frénaud exemplifies particularly clearly the related themes of fatalism and immobility because of the fact that he was a prisoner of war. Not all the poems contained in *Les Rois Mages* were written in captivity. Many of them illustrate Frénaud's concern with breaking away from an established pattern of life: a need that was obviously intensified by his imprisonment.

Like Marcenac, Frénaud voices a distrust of people who accept their life as if it were a habit, good or bad. He makes a careful and often painful point of distancing

himself from others who manage to accept their given existence complacently, without question:

> Regards qui m'accueillez en vain,
> je ne suis pas des vôtres, assis à votre table,
> partageant le pain et le vin.
> Je ne sais plus mentir avec vos mensonges.
> Je suis de l'autre côté de votre paix,
> éternellement acceptée. (*RM* 32)

The implicit reference here to the Sacrament of Communion is typical of Frénaud, who sets Christianity amongst the 'lies' that attempt to give our lives some semblance of a ready-made order. What he both envies and refuses is this notion of existence as something fixed and peaceful, to be eternally accepted. This refusal to accept a fixed order of existence remains constant, underpinning the various changes of tone in Frénaud's work. In 'Prière', he humorously attacks the social conventions adhered to in a despised 'pays des dentistes et des vivriers' (*RM* 53). Driven by an almost visceral desire to expand his existence, he refuses the safety and relinquishes the support of these conventions:

> Je ne suis pas fait pour ces agrès dérisoires
> où je trompe le désir
> de bondir en dehors de moi et de ce monde gris.
> Gréement, château, vagues, je nie
> ces niais points d'appui qu'inventa
> l'esprit, pour des raisons honorables. (*RM* 53)

In the poem 'L'Ordre', we have further evidence of Frénaud's non-acceptance of stability. He personifies order as an insurance salesman - a latter-day Mephistopheles who promises peace of mind in exchange for our dreams: 'La prime vous plaira: je ne prends que les songes' (*RM* 46). Again, the humour acts as a measure of the poet's distance from established order.

Sustained by another, very different tone, this same theme informs certain poems that Frénaud wrote as a prisoner of war in Brandebourg. Here was a situation where Frénaud was constrained to submit to order, and where his existence was forcibly limited to a dull routine. He describes himself working at Quitzöbel as a labourer: 'prisonnier du mouvement du sable et des pins, monotone' (*RM* 108). This concrete

experience of captivity is extended into a more general metaphor for a certain type of human existence, dominated by habit. In 'Souvenir', for example, Frénaud declares that his fellow prisoners' lot is neither better nor worse than what they suffer in their normal, everyday lives:

> Hommes éloignés de leurs mamelles nourricières,
> ni mieux, ni pires que dans leur vie selon l'habitude,
> par les hivers et les printemps qui recommencent,
> par les années,
> (...)
> captifs à n'en jamais finir. (*RM* 119)

Frénaud seems to believe that it is part of the human condition to be imprisoned within some inexorable order.

In prison as outside, Frénaud is haunted by the belief that his 'vie unique' is directly threatened by the easy monopoly of habit. Fixed, slave-like, in the routine and the identity accorded him by his gaolers, he loses track of the precious distinction of his life:

> Comme un rameur sur les galères du roi,
> j'ai ma place marquée dans la chaîne des wagonnets,
> de l'aube au crépuscule je remplis et je vide
> ces mornes sabliers.
> Et ma vie unique s'enfouit sous la terre
> qui ne reviendra pas comme les hirondelles. (*RM* 111)

The many references to sand in the poetry Frénaud wrote at the time not only describe his physical surroundings, but connote the state of undifferentiated monotony into which his life had been cast. In 'J'irai prendre la place d'un autre', he writes of having lost his identity - of having been annihilated by the undistinguished rhythms of habit:

> Il a disparu en combattant contre le sable.
> Ses yeux cessaient de le reconnaître
> et il ne fut plus là,
> mais les lents sédiments de l'habitude
> et leurs insectes gras. (*RM* 105)

In 'Les Rois Mages', a more allegorical poem which Frénaud also wrote while in captivity, the appeal and the threat of familiar order and routine are both depicted. In the final stanza, the narrator/king almost renounces his quest, so strong is the urge to return to the stability that initially drove him away:

je maudis l'aventure, je voudrais retourner
vers la maison et le platane
pour boire l'eau de mon puits que ne trouble pas la lune,
et m'accomplir sur mes terrasses toujour égales,
dans la fraîcheur immobile de mon ombre. (*RM* 130)

In all of these examples, Frénaud signals a belief that man relinquishes his 'real' existence by accepting, or by being forced to accept, the 'chétive monotonie' of life (*RM* 117). His images of monotony and of torpor describe an impoverished existence; he maligns equally those who accept it and those who force others to accept it.

(b) Immobility

In the extract taken from 'Les Rois Mages', Frénaud draws a parallel between the narrator's urge to return to a familiar, established order, and his desire for immobility. The two, accepting a given order of existence, and becoming petrified or immobilised, go hand in hand. The idea that we come to a standstill in resigning ourselves to a given destiny is commonly expressed in Resistance poetry. As Char puts it: 'Etre stoïque, c'est se figer, avec les beaux yeux de Narcisse' (*FM* 86). Again, I refer the reader back to Chapter II, where the poets wrote of France being immobilised by the spirit of resignation that reigned after the defeat.

In Eluard's *Poésie et vérité 1942*, this spirit of hopeless lassitude is associated with a certain viscosity, or a painful slowing down in time. Despairing evocations are given of monotonous, lack-lustre days, qualified by an absence of love, hope and desire. In 'L'horizon droit', for example, Eluard writes of a 'matin sans désirs matin sans journée' in which 'un feu s'est éteint' (*OC* I 1126); the same listlessness is apparent in 'Notre nuit meilleure que nos jours', and again it is linked with a slackening of time:

Le jour revient le jour est maintenant partout
(...)
Dans l'épaisseur de l'homme une étoile s'éteint
Et la femme soulève son enfant de plomb
(...)
La main sans avenir l'oiseau de nul présage
Les robes les maisons bien fermées à l'amour
La route monotone sous les pieds des pauvres (*OC* I 1123)

In *Au rendez-vous allemand,* Eluard again gives descriptions of a stifling atmosphere in which man is imprisoned and immobilised, without dreams and without hope. In 'Tuer', this limited, diminished existence is connected overtly with France's defeat and the Armistice:

> Il tombe cette nuit
> Une étrange paix sur Paris
> Une paix d'yeux aveugles
> De rêves sans couleur
> Qui se cognent aux murs
> Une paix de bras inutiles
> De fronts vaincus (*OC* I 1255)

Time seems to have stopped and people to have become petrified in the strange peace that was imposed on France. In 'Finir' (*LO* I), Eluard writes:

> Voici qu'un tourbillon gluant
> Fixe à jamais rides grimaces
> Voici que les cercueils enfantent
> Que les verres sont pleins de sable (*OC* I 1022)

Whereas before, people's lives were only limited by death, now they seem limited by the very shame of France's defeat:

> Nous prétendions seule la Mort
> Seule la terre nous limite
> Mais maintenant c'est la honte
> Qui nous mure tout vivants (*ARA; OC* I 1186)

Using similar terms to evoke the claustrophobic sense of imprisonment engendered by the Occupation, Seghers too writes of time standing still and hanging heavily over man. He describes the dynamic flow of life being suspended and replaced by an uncanny rigidity:

> Le présent s'enlisait dans la vase des lônes,
> Rien ne venait, l'eau se gâtait,
> L'aube et le soir s'étaient liés en nuit polaire
> La terre tournait sur nos coeurs
> (...)
> Rien ne poussait. (...) (*DP* 33-4)

In this stillness of time, all life seems emptied of substance, petrified and deadened:

> Une chanson tout est silence
> Une marelle sans enfants
> Un parc sans chêne qui fiance
> Sans ciel le ciel sans vent le vent
>
> Comme des amis sans nouvelles

Comme des doigts ne tenant plus
Entre celle qui fut et celle
Qui sera, le Temps s'est pendu (*DP* 48)

Worst of all, man is fettered within this stasis: 'environné de nuit' in 'ce temps somnambule' (*FA* 22).

Aragon also writes of man being petrified and condemned to some eternal present:

Qui donc a déchaîné la peur cette bannie
Et barbouillé de bleu panique les carreaux
Le sable sous le toit Dans le coeur l'insomnie
Personne ne lit plus le sort dans les tarots (*Cr* 5)

Tardieu describes the same debilitating inertia in *Jours pétrifiés*. In 'Le paysage', he shows that a 'long supplice' (p. 93) has reduced people to a state of cowering immobility whereby, as he says, 'Tu ne peux plus avancer, tu n'oses plus regarder ni entendre' (p. 93). In 'Petit matin', Tardieu takes this inertia as a measure of man's spiritual death:

Parle un bâillon sur la bouche
(...)
Peut-être le ciel est-il vide
l'astre l'éclair enchaînes
la vie et l'amour trahis
peut-être l'Homme est-il mort? (p. 90)

Emmanuel, too, portrays man fixed within an everlasting present. In *La Liberté guide nos pas*, he writes: 'Noire et compacte éternité / Tu es sur l'homme' (p. 85). He describes himself being transformed into something inanimate:

(...) la Voix à travers les doigts me plaque un masque
qui ronge sans répit mon secret, et durcit
sur ma face, scellant les lèvres, rendant fixe
le regard que le vent rigide a traversé (p. 95)

This metaphor of the mask is continued. The mobile features of the human face seem to have become rigidly set. With 'les lèvres collées à l'abîme par le gel' (p. 98), man has been struck dumb and is 'tout meurtri de mutisme' (p. 127). People's faces have turned vacant 'comme ces vieux miroirs ternis faute d'images / dans les chambres aux volets clos depuis longtemps' (p. 141).

All of these examples illustrate the same basic idea, that man has become trapped in some fixed perspective. In Emmanuel's 'Ménades', there is a strong suggestion that people have become immobilised and cut off from their future by accepting their

'slavery' and accepting the rule of force:

> Ployée par les souffles d'airain de la contrainte
> moutonne à l'infini l'échine des armées
> et les hommes creusés en avant vont s'abattre
> vague après vague contre l'Ombre de granit
> que les puissants nomment la Force! O esclave
> plus tu te courbes plus elle pèse sur toi
> qui marches sans futur en sa nuit éternelle (*Com* 43)

It is interesting that some descriptions of the occupying forces also stress rigidity. In 'Bêtes et méchants' (*AD*), Eluard describes the Nazi Occupiers as 'Raides de saluts / Et raides de peur' (*OC* I 1232).

In 'Allemands beaux enfants', Seghers draws a comparable portrait. As often happens in Resistance poetry, the enemy is cast as the inverse of an ideal humanity. Emblems which comprise in Seghers's vocabulary, as we shall see further on, 'un homme de chez nous' (*FA* 70), find themselves distorted in this portrayal of the occupying forces. The fluidity, light and movement that ideally characterise man are, in their case, transformed into fixity; their faces are inanimate masks:

> Somnambules au coeur des mondes animés
> Allemands beaux enfants au masque de ferraille
> Visages méprisants sur des fleuves de paille
> Têtes illuminées d'un soleil minéral
> (...)
> Vos lèvres ont figé dans leur moule de bronze (*FA* 48)

The progress of time has been halted within them; they merely follow the brutal destiny that has been meted out for them:

> L'horloge humaine en vous ne bat plus vous étiez
> Une pâte liée de grandeur et de bière
> Un destin de tueurs où l'homme au jet de pierre
> Se mesurait. (*FA* 49)

They have come trapped in their own petrifaction: 'Unter den Linden, les soldats de pierre qui étaient des hommes / Sentent leur sang se figer, le temps se caille sur leurs fusils' (*FA* 46).

These references to people within France being petrified, condemned to some eternal present, coupled with the parallel references to Nazi soldiers being rigid and stone-like, point towards what the poets believed to be one of the greatest threats to

man posed by Nazism. Through force, Hitlerism itself became a destiny which resolved, significantly, to last a millenium, if not eternally. Within this schema, individuals would merely assume the roles that were meted out to them, whether they were amongst the elite or amongst the damned. The creed of biological determination is sufficient measure of the rigid conception that Nazism had of man.

The new fatality was, as Sartre puts it, 'l'homme comme espèce biologique avec son destin d'espèce'.[6] In *Le Musée Grévin*, Aragon qualifies racial determinism as a destiny Nazism intended to impose on man. The words are voiced by the Occupier:

> Esclaves, vous vivrez selon
> Le sort fixé par mes augures
> Il est écrit dans leurs figures
> Que les bruns soient les chiens des blonds
> J'instaure le nouveau Jeu de l'Oye (p. 17)

This was none other than the political practice, in its worst form, of essentialism.

This, I believe, explains the references in the poetry to time standing still. After the war, Char was to write that 'criminels sont ceux qui arrêtent le temps dans l'homme pour l'hypnotiser, pour perforer son âme' (*RBS* 140). The force of Nazism 'hypnotised' the French people into submission, defining them in terms of their defeat and their shame at the same time as it defined Aryans and non-Aryans by their inalterable genetic make-up. To promote once and for all a given definition of man, and to deny any possibility of change, is tantamount to stopping the natural progress of time, the instrument of change.

To accept this meaning as absolute - to accept, as Char puts it in *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, that 'l'être se [définit] par rapport à ses cellules, à son hérédité, à la course brève ou prolongée de son destin' (*FM* 127) - is to condemn oneself to an eternal present and resign oneself to a condition that is as insurmountable as it is sometimes intolerable. In the words of Mounin, commenting on what he terms the 'anti-essentialist' poetry of Eluard, Char and Ponge:

> Si l'homme est irrévocablement quelque chose (et presque tous les tenants de cette position disent: quelque chose d'imparfait, de désespérant), il est inutile de tenter quoi que ce soit. C'est toujours au nom de la déplorable nature humaine éternelle qu'on

> a jeté la dérision sur les efforts de ceux qui s'obstinent à vouloir changer la condition de l'homme.[7]

Like Mounin, Char believed that the inevitable result of 'une fatalité maligne' is to 'interdire tout changement autre que superficiel de la condition profonde des hommes' (*RBS* 24).

The fact that the conditions of the present were so appalling at the time in France, and the identity grafted onto people by Nazism so intolerable, was perhaps instrumental in leading Resistance poets, amongst others, to formulate and voice their opposition to the concept that man can be defined according to some unchanging nature. To the notion of man as a fixed, knowable entity, they opposed the view that we are constantly in the state of becoming something else, defying definition and defying petrifaction. This alternative account of man is examined below.

2. TIME AND CHANGE. MAN'S RELATIVITY

A lot of Resistance poetry is marked by the idea that instead of being some abstract essence, outside of time, man is a creature of circumstance, whose existence is determined by all the changes wrought by time. In its account of man at least, Resistance poetry is strongly anti-eternal. As Char puts it in *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, 'L'éternité n'est guère plus longue que la vie' (*FM* 113).

The first step in proposing our relativity is to dispel the illusion that we are eternally the same, an essence beyond and unchanged by time. Marcenac asks:

> Faut-il rester ce que nous sommes
> Eternels entre terre et ciel
> Comme une algue au ras des marées
> Herbes de l'homme (*CC* 64)

The resounding 'no' with which Resistance poetry answers this is based not only on the idea that, again in the words of Marcenac, 'Il faut faire un sort à la vie' (*CC* 15), but also on the fact that it is possible for each of us to construct our own destinies, and become, like time itself, the instrument of our own change.

Hence the various descriptions in Resistance poetry of man re-entering time. It is this process which Char describes in *Feuillets d'Hypnos:*

> Le temps n'est plus secondé par les horloges dont les aiguilles s'entre-dévorent aujourd'hui sur le cadran de l'homme. Le temps, c'est du chiendent, et l'homme deviendra du sperme de chiendent. (*FM* 93)

Further on, this same idea is qualified by the thought that living each moment intensely is a function of recognizing the immediate threat to life:

> On donnait jadis un nom aux diverses tranches de la durée: ceci était un jour, cela un mois, cette église vide, une année. Nous voici abordant la seconde où la mort est la plus violente et la vie la mieux définie. (*FM* 110)

The fatal transience of human existence was experienced almost physically in wartime.

Mounin praises Char as the poet who 'inlassablement restitue le monde à son mouvement',[8] and, in his introduction to *Fureur et Mystère*, Berger characterises Char's work as an appeal against immobility: 'Rien ne le provoque plus que *l'immobilité* (c'est-à-dire: l'acceptation, le statu quo, la résignation)' (*FM* 7).

In his poetry and other writings, Char qualifies himself in similar terms. Char was strongly influenced by the Ionian philosopher, Heraclitus, who formulated what has become known as a philosophy of perpetual flux. The well-known dictum of Heraclitus: 'Nous entrons et n'entrons pas dans les mêmes fleuves, nous sommes et ne sommes pas. (...) On ne peut pas entrer deux fois dans le même fleuve',[9] suggests that any description of being must take into account a principle of change, movement and flux. Char, on various occasions, acknowledges an indebtedness to Heraclitus.[10] The philosopher's influence is certainly visible in Char's descriptions of himself as 'ce torrent au limon serein' (*FM* 51), or as an 'homme de berges - creusement et inflammation - ne pouvant l'être toujours de torrent' (*FM* 132): a poet who admits that 'Aller me suffit' (*FM* 22) and chooses once and for all 'l'antistatique' (*FM* 132).

This resistance to stasis is urged upon others as well. *Seuls demeurent* opens with the line, 'L'homme fuit l'asphyxie' (*FM* 19). Written in 1938, this can, I believe, be related usefully to Char's belief that the pre-war years were marked by a 'malignant fatality'. Such a fatality asphyxiates us, economising the range of possibilities that should be open to us as existants. Char dubs this 'une atroce

économie' (*FM* 24). The 'Argument' that opens *Seuls demeurent* highlights Char's wish to counteract this: 'Déborder l'économie de la création, agrandir le sang des gestes' (*FM* 19). This, he contends, is the 'devoir de toute lumière' (*FM* 19).

Accordingly, his poetry vibrates with images of movement. Sometimes the tone is quiet and determined, as in 'Que le jour te maintienne sur l'enclume de sa fureur blanche!' (*FM* 29), where the fury of the surging wave is counterbalanced by the benedictory air of the address. Again, it is with steady, driving hope that he envisages a day when 'quelques hommes entreprendront sans ruse le voyage de l'énergie de l'univers' (*FM* 35). Sometimes the movement referred to, and the tone which sustains it, are unrelentingly violent. There is an excellent example of this in *Seuls demeurent:* 'Frère, silex fidèle, ton joug s'est fendu. L'entente a jailli de tes épaules' (*FM* 32). This is a move towards freedom: away from the burden and limitations connoted by 'joug'. The movement itself is sudden and violent: witness the use of the verbs 'fendre' and 'jaillir'. Perhaps the most striking feature of this movement is the language in which it is expressed: the shock of the conflicting connotations of 'fidèle'/'fendu', and 'entente'/'jailli'; the image of the 'entente' springing from his shoulders, like the unfashioned yoke. The impulse that propels the movement in Char's poetry is the perpetual desire to break out of restrictions placed on existence, through the agency of time.

This urge to seize the brief moment of human existence for all its worth is expressed equally clearly in the poetry of Seghers. His introduction to *Le Temps des merveilles* (1978) gives a sense of Seghers's continuing appreciation of the provisional quality of human life, and of his belief that life's transience makes it all the more precious - all the more worth seizing:

> nous vivons dans un provisoire dont nous ne prenons conscience que petit à petit. Que sommes-nous? Des "squatters", au mieux, les locataires d'un instant. Mais quel instant! Si prodigieux, entre le Rien et le Tout, qu'il demande sans cesse à être vécu, partagé, éclairci. (p. 7)

From this belief derives some of the dynamic quality of Seghers's work, which constantly forges forward into the future. He chooses not to dwell on the past and

have his existence weighted down by its fixity. In 'Souvenir', for example, he writes:

> Les joies n'ont plus leur couleurs vives
> Les chagrins n'ont rien de profond
> Des jours pareils toujours se suivent . . .
>
> C'est ça, ton passé; tout s'y mêle
> Et s'agglutine et s'y confond
> Un pavé de joies et de peines
> Comme d'un chien jeté en Seine
> Son poids t'entraîne vers le fond. (*Bonne espérance; TM* 10)

Similarly, in 'La fête', he rejects the past and goes on to cry: 'Gloire au jour qui va naître, à l'Avenir!' (*CP* 10).

This idea of being constantly on the move, unfettered by the past and always on the brink of discovery and change is a visceral part of Seghers's own outlook on life:

> Aux repères, j'ai toujours préféré les jalons. Les jours qui ne sont plus font un poids sur la vie, et les délices du passé sont des sables mouvants. (...) La vie, l'aventure de la vie, la découverte, me sont plus précieuses, plus viscéralement miennes que le retour vers ce qui fut.[11]

Seghers willingly accepts his position as a 'passager du monde immobile' (*DP* 35), and constantly makes a virtue of the transitory nature of our existence: 'La vie passe, passons' (*DP* 37). Living thus in a constant dynamic, we are no longer oppressed by time, but move with it in what Seghers describes as a joyful dance: 'Au delà de la nuit, nous entrons dans la ronde / Où le temps à nos bras danse la capucine' (*FA* 31).

The desire to live in the here and now, embracing the provisional quality of life instead of sheltering its threat in tempting illusions of permanence, betokens, as I have argued, the will to change; to shed one identity as soon as it begins to stick and break out beyond whatever limitations are set upon our existence. Thus, in Seghers's work, an 'estimable life' is qualified as one of movement and perpetual change; a life in which we are, constantly, 'Epris de formes inconnues / Tournés vers l'avenir' (*TM* 12). Seghers assumes this type of existence for himself: 'Je m'en vais dans le ciel vivre d'autres chansons' (*DP* 37); 'je m'en vais / Loin de moi, vers l'horizon insaisissable' (*DP* 66). He confidently proclaims its value for others. 'Voici venue la grande mue', he writes, and he goes on to express how propitious this season of moulting is for man: 'Elle nous emporte et c'est la vie à hauteur d'homme' (*FA* 21).

'Septembre 1939' contains the key elements of Seghers's thought concerning the necessary changes, metamorphoses and ruptures that take place in the course of human life. In it, Seghers welcomes again the immense desire and potential for change in people; it is this potential that enables us to push back the boundaries that tighten in upon our existence:

> Au delà des limites de la vie, il y a toujours une vie nouvelle
> Dont les frontières sont inconnues.
> Au delà des jours sans souvenirs
> Il y a toujours une condition d'un autre domaine
> Il y a toujours un air plus vif, un ciel plus clair
> Une aspiration immense dont tu ne te savais pas capable,
>
> Une rupture
>
> Elle engendre une naissance émerveillée. (*CP* 27)

The title reminds us that the poem is rooted in a particular present: the outbreak of war. In a very real way, the steady train of life was about to be shattered. This is a good example of how Seghers takes contingency by the horns and fashions it into a principle wholly consonant with his own ethic of existence.

The same can be said of his appreciation of Resisters. It is, I think, significant that Seghers chose to highlight their ability (as commendable as it was necessary) to change identity. Resisters are admired as exemplary beings who can freely metamorphose. See, for example, 'Chanson de celui qui changeait de noms' (*DP* 44), which celebrates the constant and often precarious reshuffling of names and identities during the Resistance. For Seghers, these partisans are privileged beings, who follow and carry with them 'la voix puissante de l'aventure':

> Qui vivent de rencontre et de fanaux transmis
> Ceux qui s'en vont on ne sait où et reparaissent
> Avec de mêmes yeux et d'autres noms, qui naissent
> A chaque jour nouveaux parmi d'autres amis (*DP* 21)

As far as Seghers was concerned, what the Resistance stood for, and what it was fighting for, was to allow and encourage others, similarly, to reshuffle their identities, to break out of stifling restrictions on their lives, and to effect their own 'naissance émerveillée'.

For Frénaud as for Seghers, existence is ideally not an acceptance of what is, but a quest for what could be. Once again, it is shown to involve movement and change. Clearly, Frénaud's captivity was all the more insufferable to him because of his conviction that life is ideally ordered by change. 'Le beau voyage', written in Brandebourg, ends with the lines: 'O biche blessée, je suis avec toi dans la métamorphose. / Pourquoi suis-je arrêté sur les bords de l'Elbe?' (*RM* 103). By the same token, his desire to 'bondir en dehors de moi et de ce monde gris' (*RM* 53) seems to have been intensified rather than caused by his imprisonment. It would be interesting here to look at three poems from *Les Rois Mages*, two of which were written in captivity and all of which concentrate on individuals who leave behind the lives to which they are accustomed, to embark on a disorientating quest. In 'Le voyageur', a traveller uncharacteristically leaves all his luggage behind. Unburdening himself of habit, he takes with him only his uneasiness:

> Il a mis l'habitude dans un sac,
> l'a posée chez le marchand de toutes choses.
> Deux sols, en tout.
> La peur, il l'emportait vers les autres rivages.
> (...)
> Jeune homme hardi et pâle, il va
> Sur les chemins du hasard ténébreux. (*RM* 123)

Again, the horseman in 'Soir du chevalier' progresses ever, in constant revolution, towards 'd'autres rives' (*RM* 121):

> Son coeur est dans les fruits non mordus
> et dans d'autres plus beaux qu'il va chercher.
> Son âme est dans les signes devant lui,
> qui l'attirent hors la détresse des victoires. (*RM* 122)

Finally, the narrator/king of 'Les Rois Mages' is seen moving away from the familiar order and routine of his past life towards an elusive, shifting goal.

In all three journeys, the object of the quest seems to be the very state of disorientation that it induces. The traveller's dream too is a shifting entity, for 'Plus il s'approche de lui, / plus il s'éloigne de ce qu'il quête' (*RM* 125). What Frénaud welcomes in all these journeys is precisely the restlessness produced in the travellers by their ill-defined and ever-changing objectives. The goal itself - a limit on existence

- is subordinated to the unquenchable desire for a goal. This is, of course, tragic: witness the king's despairing cry: 'Mais je ne puis guérir d'un appel insensé' (*RM* 130). It is also, however, the source of our dignity, perpetually to expand the horizons that would otherwise limit our existence. Note Frénaud's measured admiration in the lines:

> C'est un voyageur qui ne cède pas.
> Il pousse plus avant, il ira plus vite.
> La terre ne finit pas à cet horizon
> de soleil qui tombe, ce soir dans les pics. (*RM* 125)

These extracts help to illustrate that the expression of man embracing time and change is far removed from escapism. The poets I have examined did not adhere to the view, shared by others, that they should sit it out and wait for things to change. They could not believe that man and his situation would inevitably change for the good with the passage of time. Instead, they promoted the belief that by entering time - by responding to the present with a view to an even unattainable future - man is able continually to re-form his situation and recreate himself.

This, as the whole of *Les Rois Mages* demonstrates particularly well, is not an easy process. By far the simpler option would be to resign oneself to a fixed, if limited identity. So, in Frénaud's work, the easy triumph of a line such as 'l'ivresse du sort à conquérir' (p. 121), which rejoices in our limitlessness, strains against a thwarted desire to be limited, acceptably, once and for all. For Frénaud, the core of our dignity lies in the full assumption of our condition, and this includes the often painful equation of being and becoming: 'Devenir un homme, la seule magie, est art douloureux' (p. 113). Witness also the similarly intense, almost religious power of the line: 'J'avancerai douloureux dans l'homme que je deviens' (p. 70).

3. BECOMING VERSUS BEING : *UNE ONTOLOGIE EN ACTE*

Central to Resistance poetry is this idea of man moving forward in time, perpetually breaking away from and moving towards a stable, permanent identity. In *Partage formel*, Char describes us as 'fervents tueurs d'êtres réels dans la personne

successive de notre chimère' (*FM* 80-81). In opposition to the concept of man as a fixed essence with immutable qualities, Resistance poets equated existence with becoming; they proposed, to use the words of Marcenac, 'une ontologie en acte, une science de l'homme tel qu'il est et de l'homme en devenir'.[12]

In *La Liberté guide nos pas*, Emmanuel describes man as something potential - an 'imminence' (p. 126) - as opposed to something that is. In an important preface to the work, written in 1945, Emmanuel argues that man is continually to be recreated in creating for himself new figures and structures that will allow a temporary realisation of his ever-growing and changing potential. The nature of these figures can never be absolute: they too will become redundant as man's potential expands beyond them:

> Nous voici sans doute ramenés, par l'équilibre interne de l'histoire, à l'une de ces époques mythiques au coeur desquelles l'homme fait éclater ses structures trop étroites, et projette une figure nouvelle, qu'il lui reste à parfaire et à remplir: jusqu'à ce que, investie puis sclérosée par la connaissance intellectuelle, cette figure s'avère à son tour insuffisante à contenir les forces neuves que le temps mûrit. (p. 80)

Laying similar stress on man as a possibility to be attained, Emmanuel argues in 'L'Utilisation des mythes' that any rehabilitation of man can only be realised through 'une hypothèque hardie sur le futur' (p. 64). We have here a brief reminder that such a description remedies the process of petrifaction that was perceived clearly as a threat at the time. For Emmanuel goes on to say that this 'hypothesis' is necessary 'pour briser le processus de pétrification qui nous menace d'une indifférence et d'un esclavage illimités' (p. 64).

Ponge's unwillingness to describe man in his poetry follows his belief that to describe is to identify - to confer upon his subject an identity. In *Proêmes*, he explains his decision to concentrate on things rather than people in his poetry:

> si j'ai un dessin caché, second, ce n'est évidemment
> pas de décrire la coccinelle ou le poireau ou l'édredon.
> Mais c'est surtout de ne pas décrire l'homme.
> Parce que:
> 1° *l'on* nous en rabat un peu trop les oreilles;
> 2° etc ... (la même chose à l'infini). (p. 186)

This second point brings home, through Ponge's characteristic humour, that to

describe man would be to condemn him to an unchanging identity which would last through to infinity. It is by no means any disregard for people that bars him from describing them; it is rather his unreadiness to immobilise the immeasurable potential that propels us forward into a future image of ourselves:

> L'*Homme* est à venir. L'homme est l'avenir de l'homme.
> *
> * *
> "*Ecce homines*" (pourra-t-on dire plus tard ...) ou
> plutôt non: *ecce* ne voudra jamais rien dire de juste,
> ne sera *jamais* le mot juste.
> Non pas vois(ci) l'homme, mais veuille l'homme. (p. 208)

Char is equally disinclined to describe man as he is. Serge Velay points out that for 'le poète que mobilisent le vertige, le risque et l'audace, seule est concevable une manière de philosophie-en-actes et en constant devenir'.[13] Here again we have a poet who is more concerned with the notion of becoming than with that of being.

Char describes the notes that comprise his *Feuillets d'Hypnos* as 'la résistance d'un humanisme conscient de ces devoirs, discret sur ses vertus' (*FM* 85). I would suggest that he chooses to write of humanism in terms of its duties rather than its virtues because the image of humanity that he promotes is, like a duty, fulfilled only in action. Interested above all in 'l'homme requalifié' (*FM* 199), Char expresses man as a quality- in-the-making.

The key expression of this in Char's work is the recurring image of alluvium. The 'Argument' that opens *Seuls demeurent* is central to an understanding of his work. Of particular interest here is the line, 'Sur les arêtes de notre amertume, l'aurore de la conscience s'avance et dépose son limon' (*FM* 85). This image connects with the river metaphor that Heraclitus used to indicate the principle of perpetual change at work within the universe. The idea of 'deposits' of consciousness gradually building up records the dynamic process by which each individual consciousness engages itself, through the agency of time, in the perpetual recreation of a composite, collective, consciousness: an identifiable human reality which is dependent on, but beyond reach of the individual. Char's use of the alluvium metaphor is, as Mounin points out, the very flesh and blood of the notion of man becoming man. It is

significant in this respect that children (engaged themselves in the process of becoming adults) are described, in *Seuls demeurent*, as 'enfants aux yeux de limon' (*FM* 44).

Importantly, Char also describes his own work as a poet in terms of alluvium. The poet is referred to directly in his work as a 'porteur d'alluvions en flammes' (*FM* 77) and a 'torrent au limon serein' (*FM* 51). In 1946, Char published a collection of poems entitled *Premières Alluvions*. This is taken by Mounin as evidence of Char's conviction that the poet has a vital part to play in the advent of man: that 'le poète l'aide à devenir de toutes ses forces' (*Avez-vous lu Char?* 171).

This introduces a very important connection between poetic creation and the process of becoming that has just been described. Char refers to poetry as 'la vie future à l'intérieur de l'homme requalifié' (*FM* 199). Central to Resistance poets' understanding of the part their poetry had to play in aiding and inciting others to become, this point is developed further on in this present chapter, and in Chapter IV.

4. 'LA CREATION DE SOI'[14]

Inseparable from the idea that we are engaged in a constant process of becoming is the belief that we have to construct our own destinies and so create ourselves.

In one of his 'Poèmes intérieurs', Seghers rejects any notion that his own life should be determined from outside: 'Moi je forge mes propres chaînes, / C'est pour me hisser jusqu'à moi' (*DP* 67). With the same emphasis on self-determination, he addresses his reader as the 'filateur de ton propre fil' (*DP* 35). In 1978, in his introduction to *Le Temps des merveilles*, Seghers would continue to stress our capacity and our need to invent our own lives: 'jeté dans sa propre vie, nu entre les dragons, l'homme découvre bientôt qu'il lui faut naviguer à l'estime, en inventant sa route' (p. 8).

In the 'Argument' which opens *Figures*, Tardieu expresses a similar view, that since the decline in religious belief, man has been constrained to build his own image:

> Dans un monde où tout se tait sous la menace d'une épouvantable absence, l'homme autrefois bercé par la voix des

> dieux se retrouve seul, contraint (...) de rebâtir sa propre image
> à partir des dernières marches du néant. (p. 9)

The same emphasis on self-creation underlies Frénaud's powerful declaration of human rights: 'je siffle, je proclame le droit de l'homme d'être un dieu' (*IPP* 41) and Ponge's comment in *Proêmes:* 'Il faut que l'homme, tout comme d'abord le poète, trouve la loi, sa clef, son dieu en lui-même' (pp. 161-2). It is perhaps surprising how similar to the statements of these poets, all of them atheists, is Emmanuel's comment in his introduction to *La Liberté guide nos pas:* 'chacun de nous est un créateur d'humanité, à son rang et dans son ordre. La vie n'est pas hors de nous, elle est nous'(p. 72).[15]

It is interesting that the poets often describe Resisters as the builders or creators of man. Partisans of the Resistance were, for these poets, exemplary beings in so far as they were actively involved in the process of creating humanity. The type of man they were defending and creating was, in their image, creatively resistant.

The idea of Resisters as creators of humanity underlies, I believe, the use of the Promethean myth in a number of Resistance poems. Prometheus, the figure who stole fire from the gods to give to humanity, is known as the bearer of light and the bringer of hope and is also credited with the creation of mortals - with having fashioned man from clay and animated him with fire. Before examining the traces of this myth in Resistance poetry, it is worth nothing that Hitler described the Aryan race as the 'Prométhée de l'humanité' in *Mein Kampf.*[16] Following in the footsteps of Gobineau and Chamberlain, he believed that the Aryan race alone was capable of spreading civilization and creating a new type of man. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that Nazism too was intent on creating a new humanity.

Eluard's statement in *Poésie involontaire et poésie intentionnelle* that 'tout homme est frère de Prométhée' (*OC* I 1134), derives from his belief that we must create ourselves or will ourselves to become, in a constant aspiration towards the impossible, rendered real or possible by our dreams and imagination:

> Si nous voulions, rien ne nous serait impossible. Le plus dénué d'entre nous a le pouvoir, tout comme le plus riche, de nous remettre, de ses mains appliquées et de ses yeux confiants, un trésor inestimable, ses rêves et sa réalité que raison, bon sens, méchanceté ne parviennent pas à détruire (...) Tout homme est frère de Prométhée. (*OC* I 1134)

The exemplary figures celebrated in Eluard's Resistance poetry are all described in terms of the light and the fire that emanates from them. They are all bearers of hope who animate our desire to become. In epitaphs written in memory of Gabriel Péri, for example, Eluard first associates Péri with light (he is in our present 'comme y est la lumière' (*OC* II 691)), and then with the hope that projects us forward into a future image of ourselves. Eluard has Péri narrate his own epitaph:

> J'ai chanté l'homme qui viendra
> Prendre des forces sur ma tombe
>
> Ecoutez-moi vous qui luttez
> J'ai dit l'espoir qui vous anime
> Il n'y a rien dans l'avenir
> Que je n'ai désiré meilleur (*OC* II 691)

Eluard described a number of writers assassinated during the war as 'Des hommes nourris d'espoir' (*OC* I 1286); 'tous à l'image de l'homme', they help us to aspire to a future life: 'Tous nous rendant la vie possible' (*OC* I 1287). Similarly, in 'La victoire de Guernica', those who live their lives authentically are said to be those who help construct a future (both a new world and a new image of man):

> Hommes réels pour qui le désespoir
> Alimente le feu dévorant de l'espoir
> Ouvrant ensemble le dernier bourgeon de l'avenir (*ARA; OC* I 1814)

Seghers, whose frequent use of the emblems of light and fire witnesses the influence of Eluard, describes hope as 'un espoir ardent comme le feu de la terre' (*FA* 26) and revolution as a 'porteur de feu' (*DP* 11). For Seghers as for Eluard, the ideal and privileged man is Promethean: 'Tout homme est une nébuleuse de soleils' (*TM* 8). In 'Aux jeunes', he impresses upon the young their duty to build their own destinies, to carry and to spread the fire of their hope in the future:

> Si tu portes en toi le feu
> Si tu animes qui tu touches
> Si tu forges pour l'avenir

Les socs les armes de la joie
Et les pylônes de l'espoir
Tu es un homme de chez nous (*FA* 71)

Marcenac describes the Resisters of the time in terms of this same promethean ideal. All of the following excerpts are taken from *Le Ciel des fusillés*. Marcenac describes a Resistance hero, Valentin Feldman, as a 'témoin de lumière' and a 'forgeron de l'obscur' (p. 31). The allies are referred to as 'guerriers du soleil' (p. 52); the death of a young partisan is shrouded in light: 'Le jeune mort au flanc de l'abîme solaire / Brille entre deux haies de cristal' (p. 28), and stars are said to rise from the 'corps lumineux des martyrs' (p. 35). Jean Lurçat's son, killed in the Resistance, is imagined as a ball of flame falling, like Icarus, from the sky:

Icare écartelé dans son sang de lumière
Il venait de mourir pour nous donner le jour
Et du fond d'une nuit dont nous ne savons rien
Il allumait un feu irrévocable (pp. 62-3)

In direct contrast to this, the enemy (represented in Marcenac's work as an inverse humanity) is described in terms of darkness. The soldiers of National Socialism are described as 'les serviteurs de l'ombre' who make war on daylight (and on the possibility of becoming): 'Ils ont fait la guerre aux enfants / Ils la font au jour qui se lève' (p. 52). A young German, killed in the service of Nazism, is described as a 'fossoyeur de soleils' (p. 70), and the occupying forces are dubbed 'les sauvages chasseurs d'étoiles' (p. 45).

The light that surrounds exemplary figures in Marcenac's work is a light which illuminates and inspires all who come into contact with it. Of Lurçat's son, he writes: 'Il venait de mourir Nous l'ignorions encore / Mais nous tendions déjà les deux mains vers sa flamme' (p. 63). The light emanating from the communist martyrs celebrated in 'Le ciel des fusillés' illuminates, significantly, the future of humankind:

Douze étoiles rouges dans la poitrine
Constellation O mes amis assassinés
Au plus noir de la vie se devine le monde
Où vous inscrivez l'avenir
(...)
Les astrologues ennemis
Perdent la vue Perdent la voix Perdent la tête
Leurs étoiles ne comptent plus

Nous entrons dans le signe des Fusillés
La nouvelle saison des hommes
Commence avec celles qui montent
Du corps lumineux des martyrs (pp. 34-5)

The old Collaborator caricatured in 'Un jour viendra' describes Resisters as 'des monstres de lumière' (p. 42). What he fears from them is precisely the hope that they give: the 'maigre espoir qui le torture' - which tortures in as much as it threatens to tear him from the apathy that he prefers. He curses Resisters as 'la grande race devineuse / Qui sait voir l'aube en plein minuit' (p. 42). The ultimate result of this hope, and the thing that he most fears, is that it will create new beings who will radiate a similar light: 'Ils fécondent le monde à leur dernier regard / Et puis naissent naissent des monstres de lumière comme eux-mêmes' (p. 42).

5. SELF-CREATION AND POETIC CREATION

> Les hommes éveillés ont un monde unique et commun, mais chaque dormeur se détourne dans son monde particulier. Les dormeurs sont artisans et collaborateurs de ce qui devient dans le monde.
> (Heraclitus)[17]

The emphasis that is given here to Resistance partisans as creators of humanity is paralleled in the poets' references to their own work, both as Resisters and as poets. In their minds at least, there seemed to be a coincidence of aims: the function of Resister and poet alike being to mobilise people into some future, better image of themselves. I would argue here that there is a short step from the idea of self-creation to the notion of poetic creation. Like the partisans they describe, Resistance poets were consciously Promethean.

The key instrument which the poet has at his or her disposal, to create with and to incite others to become and to change, is the imagination. In the words of Mounin: 'L'instrument poétique du devenir de l'homme, c'est l'imagination.'[18] Char highlights that this is his own mode of becoming by referring to it in *Feuillets d'Hypnos* as 'Imagination, mon enfant' (*FM* 112).

Frénaud's poem 'Naissance' is a good illustration of the connection between self-creation and poetic creation. It is worth quoting *in extenso*.

La mer qui avait tant navigué, ma mer noire,
enfin s'est approchée de la terre ma mère,
la vieille depuis si longtemps d'avec moi séparée.
La frange, où l'oeil du cheval hagard
perce à travers la crinière,
s'est aplatie sur les pierres et le sel.
O silence assourdissant de ce jour!
L'homme se relève hébété.
Une statue de marbre pur
s'éveille entre ses bras.

J'emporte ma naissance et je vais chez les hommes,
je chante. (*RM* 38)

Here, Frénaud presents us with an exhilarating confusion of creation myths: a coupling of sea and earth echoes a coupling of male and female; the man rising from the sea recalls the birth of Venus; the statue awakening in his arms brings to mind Pygmalion. To these, Frénaud adds his own account of creation: his unique combination of all these familiar myths, coupled with the idea that his own birth is contained in the creation that he describes. For through this creation - not so much the statue in the poem as the poem *as* statue - Frénaud claims to be reborn. The poem is a statue to his own capacity for self-creation. Importantly, he takes this poem/statue, singing, into the company of others, demonstrating through it a shared ability to create and to create ourselves.

Self-creation is invariably seen by these poets as a function of recreating the world around us. This is an important point which will be returned to in a later section of this chapter. Through the language and the imagery of the poem, the poet exemplifies the possibility of re-forming the world. Ponge puts it this way in *Proêmes*:

> Seule la littérature (...) permet de jouer le grand jeu: de refaire le monde, à tous les sens du mot *refaire*, grâce au caractère à la fois concret et abstrait, intérieur et extérieur du VERBE, grâce à son épaisseur sémantique. (p. 180)

In an interview with Charles Haroche in 1979, Marcenac makes a similar point:

> pour moi, la transformation du monde commence au niveau de l'image. (...) C'est avec l'image (...) que nous pouvons passer des termes fatals et inexpiables de *ce* monde à leur rapport, l'image, qui nous introduit à un autre monde. Cela (...) était plus visible, plus évident, avec la poésie pendant la Résistance, mais reste valable pour toute poésie, en tout temps. (p. 49)

To resign ourselves to the world as it is and to accept our identities as fixed within it is regarded by Resistance poets as a betrayal; in so doing we renounce our precious ability to change the world and to re-form ourselves. By transforming the world through imagery, the poets were conscious of doing two things.

First, the poets demonstrated that a transformation of the world is not only desirable, but possible; thus giving confidence in our imaginative ability to requalify, mutually, the world and ourselves.

Second, they gave the immediate hope that was necessary to drag people from their apathy towards an active formulation of their own destinies. A rather long quotation from Berger's 'Conversation avec René Char' (1952) will help elucidate this last point:

> on pourrait dire que, du point de vue de l'équité, la poésie, c'est le monde à sa meilleure place. Même s'il est en proie à une nature pessimiste, celui qui accepte des perspectives du Devenir doit bien sentir alors que le ressort de ce pessimisme (...) est l'espérance: espérance que quelque chose d'inespéré surgira, que l'oppression sera renversée. Il semble que la poésie (...) constitue le relai qui permet à l'être meurtri et démoralisé de retrouver des forces neuves et des raisons fraîches pour poursuivre la proie ou l'ombre sur une nouvelle lancée. (p. 9)

This idea of the function of poetry also underlies a comment by Char in *Feuillets d'Hypnos* (taken up by Marcenac in *Le Ciel des fusillés*): 'A chaque effondrement des preuves le poète répond par une salve d'avenir' (*FM* 78).

6. RESISTING ESSENTIALISM : A CONTINUAL PROCESS

To conclude this section, it is important to emphasise that what these poets were fighting for was far from any definitive model or type of man. This would be to lapse into the very same essentialism that they were condemning as an unworthy, inauthentic account of existence.

Marcenac's heroes, as we have seen, fought to create nothing more definitive and nothing less elusive than 'des monstres de lumière comme eux-mêmes' (*CF* 42). In *Notre inhabileté fatale*, Frénaud was still to stress that the remodelling of man was a continual process: 'l'effort de l'homme pour se structurer en une conscience, comme

pour se représenter le monde par un système de pensée sera toujours à recommencer' (p. 35). Man is, according to Frénaud, an 'éternelle remise en question' (p. 35). The function of poets, as Char saw it during the Resistance, was to defend man against the limitations of any fixed identity by demonstrating, through poetry, the countless possible ways of confronting the world (our situation). Welcoming the fact that we are 'jamais définitivement modelé' (*FM* 100), Char wished to keep access open to the unlimited possibilities of existence. Our existence is, he writes, 'une enclave d'inattendus et de métamorphoses dont il faut défendre l'accès et assurer le maintien' (*FM* 127). He maintains that his duty as a Resister and as a poet was to preserve man's freedom from any one identity: 'réserver l'*inaccessible* champ libre à la fantaisie de ses soleils' (*FM* 85).

For poets who believed so strongly in expanding the perceived limitations of existence in order to encourage a continual requestioning of ourselves and of the world, any respite from this process was inconceivable. Hence the perhaps surprising lack of any real ideology in Resistance poetry. No composite picture of an identifiable human type was held up as a fixed goal. It is in this very lack of abstraction that the poets differed most from the Hitlerian wish to create a new humanity. While the poets put emphasis on the process of creation itself, as the means by which man states and defines his existence, National Socialism interested itself above all in the end result: the virtuous, virile Aryan as the abstract model of humanity. There are reminders and warnings in the poetry that the battle for man can never finally be won.

Char often warns in his work against becoming complacent or satisfied with any given result. In *Feuillets d'Hypnos* he writes: 'Ne t'attarde pas à l'ornière des résultats' (*FM* 86); 'Etre du bond. N'être pas du festin, son épilogue' (*FM* 138); 'Autant que se peut, enseigne à devenir efficace, pour le but à atteindre mais pas au delà. Au delà est fumée. Où il y a fumée il y a changement' (*FM* 86). He believed that poets should teach the art of *in*security, of living life in terms of relative, never absolute successes. As he writes in *Partage formel*: 'Magicien de l'insécurité, le poète n'a que des satisfactions adoptives. Cendre toujours inachevée' (*FM* 66). In *Seuls*

demeurent we read that after reaching a certain victory, having been led to 'la reconnaissance de son exemplaire destin' (*FM* 40), the poet, 'donneur de liberté', renounces his achievement in favour of perpetual change and further requalification:

> Dans la chambre devenue légère et qui peu à peu développait les grands espaces du voyage, le donneur de liberté s'apprêtait à disparaître, à se confondre avec d'autres naissances, une nouvelle fois. (*FM* 40)

In *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, at the very height of his Resistance activity, Char cautioned himself against accepting any possible victory as final:

> Si j'en réchappe, je sais que je devrai rompre avec l'arôme de ces années essentielles, rejeter (non refouler) silencieusement loin de moi mon trésor, me reconduire jusqu'au principe du comportement le plus indigent comme au temps où je me cherchais sans jamais accéder à la prouesse, dans une insatisfaction nue, une connaissance à peine entrevue et une humilité questionneuse. (*FM* 137)

Char's main fear was that totalitarianism, of which National Socialism was the first instance, was a threat that would become politically widespread. In *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, he predicted that 'Cette guerre se prolongera au delà des armistices platoniques. L'implantation des concepts politiques se poursuivra contradictoirement, dans les convulsions et sous le couvert d'une hypocrisie sûre de ses droits' (*FM* 87). After the war, his fears turned out to be justified. In 'Impressions anciennes', he was to write:

> Nous nous sommes imaginé, en 1945, que l'esprit totalitaire avait perdu, avec le Nazisme, sa terreur, ses poisons souterrains et ses fours définitifs. Mais ses excréments sont enfouis dans l'inconscient fertile des hommes. (*RBS* 123)

Such disillusionment can be explained by the events that followed France's Liberation. The cruelty with which suspected Collaborators were treated during the *épuration* was evidence, once again, of the appeal and the danger of believing in one's infallible rightness. As the example of Nazism had shown, any system of thought which does not take into account the relativity of man and his circumstances is liable, at some point, to impose itself, brutally, on others.

Char deemed it necessary, therefore, to continue to stress the value of uncertainty after the war, believing that 'mieux vaut, certes, conserver son incertitude et son trouble, que d'essayer de se convaincre et de se rassurer en persécutant autrui' (*RBS* 38). In a note written to Francis Curel in 1948, Char writes again of the continuing need to express man's relativity:

> A mon peu d'enthousiasme pour la vengeance se substituait une sorte d'affolement chaleureux, celui de ne pas perdre un instant essentiel, de rendre sa valeur, en toute hâte, au prodige qu'est la vie humaine dans sa relativité. (*RBS* 18)

Many poems written after the Liberation told of the poets' disillusionment. Some of them, such as Jouve's 'Ravissement', stress the same need, outlined by Char, to maintain the relativist outlook which the poets had been fighting for throughout the war:

> Le temps et l'homme ou l'ineffable devenir!
> Ils font échange de mitrailles et de spirales
> D'incendies déroulés de longs cris dans la mer;
> La lutte est nue, jamais la défaite totale
>
> Et jamais la victoire ou l'amoureux éclair
> De ce que l'homme a vu dans le dieu de son âme,
> La guerre durera jusqu'à la fin des chairs
> Tout est réel, pas un mensonge à cette flamme. (*VP* 205)

The idea that the end of the war heralded a new complacency (and a return to essentialism) underlies the bitter tone of Marcenac's 'Manifeste de l'école d'Oradour', written in 1945: 'Ils me font rire ceux qui voudraient maintenant nous en voir revenir à l'homme éternel, parce que Berlin est pris, disent-ils, et le monde sauvé' (*CF* 13-4). As Marcenac sees it, the memory of what happened at Oradour-sur-Glane, and the knowledge that, without due vigilance, such instances of inhumanity would recur, denounces the complacency that fosters once more a belief in man as some eternal, unchanging essence: 'Comme si, entre l'homme et l'homme, il ne restait pas de villes à prendre, des villes comme Oradour, Oradour qui résiste à la victoire même, de tout le poids de son néant' (*CF* 14).

The challenge to essentialism is, I believe, one of the factors which give Resistance poetry a continuing relevance. Given that, as the poets had feared, the

totalitarian spirit has long outlived National Socialism, there is every good reason to believe that the reminders in Resistance poetry of man as an indomitably rich and ever-changing potential can continue to act as an antidote to its constant threat.

So far in this chapter I have looked at the poets' refusal to accept essentialism as an adequate account of our existence. This refusal involved an appeal against fatalism - the submissive attitude incurred by the belief that we are unable to change our circumstances - and a covert rejection of totalitarianism, the political model of essentialism. Against all three, Resistance poets emphasized our relativity, or our pilgrim status in a world which is, like ourselves, changeable. They expressed their belief in man not as an abstract, immovable essence, but as a being striving constantly towards an unattainable identity. One of the insights that Resistance poetry gives into human existence is that in order to exist authentically, in the absence of any given identity, we must construct our own meaningfulness, resolutely resisting the temptation simply to be with a self-determined will to become. It was of particular importance to stress these anti-essentialist ideas at a time when totalitarianism rigorously checked any such fluid concept of man.

The following section, which examines the counteraction of absurdity in Resistance poetry, outlines another important aspect of these poets' parallel defence of man and rejection of Nazism. Just as Nazism's essentialist account of man was taken as a far-reaching threat to authentic existence, so too was what some poets considered to be an inherent connection between Nazism and the absurd. The following study also develops the important idea that we are beings who, of necessity, create our own selves or our own meaningfulness.

II RESISTING NAZISM THROUGH RESISTING THE ABSURD

1. RESISTANCE POETRY : A REJECTION OF THE ABSURD

Underlying much of the poetry written during the Resistance is the notion of what has come to be known as the 'absurdity' of our condition. This notion was also the

starting point of Camus's *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, published in 1942. It refers to the fundamental meaninglessness of our lives, and derives from the fact that there is no longer any given system by which we can explain our existence. Without any rational justification for being, the only certainty we are left with is the uncomfortable certainty of death: the rest is accidental.

To take the example of just four poets. Frénaud refers to our absurdity as 'notre inhabileté fatale': our impotence in the presence of death and injustice and our lack of any firm foundation. Recurring references to 'le désert' in Frénaud's work evoke a sense of the un-human formlessness and meaninglessness to which he feels at all times victim: he is 'toujours à merci du néant' (*RM* 25). Char's preoccupation with 'la condition humaine incohérente' (*FM* 67) centres similarly around the lack of an inherent, internal justice in his relations with the rest of the world: 'Ce dont le poète souffre le plus dans ses rapports avec le monde, c'est du manque de justice interne' (*FM* 65). Tardieu's *Jours pétrifiés* often shows the poet, and man in general, grappling with a ubiquitous sense of chaos; in 'Incarnation', he embodies an idea of absurdity in a being whose voice reminds us that human existence is finite and without substance:

> Elle [sc. la bouche] dit bien ce que nous sommes,
> un moment déguisés en hommes
> avant d'éclater par la nuit
> qui gonfle nos frêles parois. (pp. 68-9)

In 1941, Ponge read the manuscript of *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and noted his response in 'Pages bis' (*Proêmes*). He readily agrees with Camus that the world is absurd and meaningless: 'Bien entendu le monde est absurde! Bien entendu, la non-signification du monde!' (p. 66); he admits that his bias towards concrete phenomena in *Le Parti pris des choses* was conceived 'à l'extrémité d'une philosophie de la non-signification du monde' (p. 171).

There are two possible responses to absurdity: to accept, as tragic, the essential meaninglessness of our condition or to accept this meaninglessness as a challenge. As Ponge said, we have the choice whether or not to judge our relativity and lack of

meaning as absurd. The challenge was to create the meaning that is missing from our lives, and so to justify our existence, while unable to lose sight of the essential backdrop of the absurd. Resistance poets were unanimous in taking up this challenge.

Frénaud, as we have seen, transforms our desire to have a god (and a god-given meaning) into our right to be a god and forge our own meaning: 'je siffle, je proclame le droit de l'homme d'être un dieu' (*IPP* 41). Similarly, he asserts in *Notre inhabileté fatale*: 'je m'étais fondé, en tant qu'homme "digne de vivre", sur la démystification de Dieu' (p. 65). Jean Lescure commented that the example of Frénaud's poetry encourages us not to accept our condition, but to 'assume' it by dint of a refusal: 'Assumer sa condition ne signifie nullement pour lui l'accepter mais porter aussi démesurément que possible le poids du refus qu'elle proclame.'[19] I would suggest that one of the things that Lescure refers to here is Frénaud's refusal to submit to absurdity.

In Frénaud's work, the dialectic of hope and non-hope, which has already been noted in passing, voices the oscillation between accepting our 'inhabileté fatale' and needing to maintain some metaphysical desire. A good example of this is 'Maison à vendre', in which the narrator agrees to buy a house which is cluttered with the debris of past occupants, including the traces of their failed enterprises and frustrated dreams. He agrees, in other words, to follow the pattern of unfulfilment and impotence which qualifies human existence:

> J'aime la crasse de l'âme des autres,
> mêlée à ces franges de grenat,
> le suint des entreprises manquées.
> Concierge, j'achète, j'achète la baraque.
> Si elle m'empoisonne, je m'y flambe.
> On ouvrira les fenêtres ... Remets la plaque.
> Un Homme entre, il flaire, il recommence. (*RM* 54)

To a certain extent, the tragic inexorability of the pattern is defeated by Frénaud's hearty acceptance of it. His resistance to the threat of absurdity consists in part in pursuing what he recognizes as an 'entreprise dérisoire' (*RM* 54) with a mixture of lucidity, stoicism and humour.

Emmanuel also refuses the tragedy of absurdity, taking it instead as the first step to realising man's unique capacity for self-determination:

> Assez de vivre dans l'absurde comme en notre climat naturel! Nous tenons une réalité simple, élémentaire, en deçà des prises de l'ironie: chacun de nous est un créateur d'humanité, à son rang et dans son ordre. (*LGP* 72)

In 'L'Utilisation des mythes', Emmanuel outlines a similar response (and a similar *choice* of responses) to 'l'horreur' - a confusion of spiritual values through which is manifested man's metaphysical crisis. Either this horror is accepted, in which case the arbitrary nature of man's existence, which is at the root of the crisis, will be reinforced - or it is recognized, rejected and fought against:

> l'horreur n'est salutaire qu'à celui qui, la connaissant lutte contre elle de toute la force de son espoir. Celui qui s'y complaît ou seulement s'y habitue renforce le règne de l'arbitraire dont l'ombre couvre déjà la surface de l'univers. (p. 63)

In 'Incarnation', Tardieu's embodiment of absurdity is shown to reap a whole tragedy of violence and chaos; yet the poet determines to stop this tragic process by harnessing this ineluctable part of man to the service of love (and therefore life):

> Nous la traînerons elle-même
> comme au soleil une fumée
> jusque sous l'arche de l'amour (*JP* 69)

Something of this same choice, of how to respond to the absurd, is suggested in the argument at the beginning of *Figures*. Tardieu proposes that the creation of harmony, measure and reason within an artist's work is just one of the possible responses to the world's inherent 'démesure' and 'déraison' (p. 12). Another response, he suggests, would be to comply with the very chaos and disorder that threaten our existence. Both responses are based on the same principle of absurdity:

> Quant à nous, si nous avons plus d'une fois refusé de faire nos dévotions aux brumes colossales qui nous dévorent, ce n'étaient pas faute de les avoir jaugées. Une sorte de fierté métaphysique nous interdisait un consentement jugé malsain. Mais notre réserve et jusqu'à notre rire, nous savions bien qu'ils sont de même étoffe que le silence et les éclats de l'écrasant Ennemi des hommes. (p. 12)

While in *Figures*, Tardieu refers to the artist in general, both Marcenac and Ponge refer specifically to the vital part that poetry in particular has to play in resisting the absurd.

In the words of Marcenac: 'il est bon que la poésie se charge de toutes les circonstances aggravantes du réel, et rejoue à chaque instant une partie désespérée contre l'absurde' (*CF* 13). Ponge looks to the ability of poetry to create meaning as a means of removing what he calls the coefficient of tragedy from the absurd:

> J'ôterais volontiers à l'absurde son coefficient de tragique.
> Par l'expression, la création de la Beauté Métaphysique (c'est-à-dire Métalogique).
> Le suicide ontologique n'est le fait que de quelques jeunes bourgeois (d'ailleurs sympathiques).
> Y opposer la naissance (ou résurrection), la *création métalogique* (la POESIE). (*Pr* 166)

It could be argued, of course, that part of what poetry always does is to render meaningful a world that is divested of meaning (or, conversely, to render meaningless a world that is invested too restrictively with meaning). During the Resistance, however, it seemed particularly important to fight against what Tardieu terms the 'brumes colossales' of the absurd because of what was clearly considered to be a terrifying manifestation of the absurd in the practices of Nazism. Throughout the rest of the chapter, it will be argued that Nazism answered the poets' definitions of absurdity on almost every count. Some introduction to the connection made between absurdity and Nazism would first be useful.

2. NAZISM AS AN INCARNATION OF THE ABSURD

It was noted above that the poets mentioned saw their response to absurdity as one of two possible responses. Another response would be, in the words of Emmanuel, to agree to live in the absurd 'comme en notre climat naturel' or to reinforce the arbitrary nature of our existence. Or, as Tardieu puts it, we could agree to 'faire nos dévotions aux brumes colossales qui nous dévorent'. There is little doubt that these poets believed that Nazism had taken the second path: that it complied with and promoted the meaninglessness of human existence. Indeed, in some of the descriptions above, it is unclear whether it is Nazism or absurdity that is being referred to as the Enemy, so closely were the two concepts fused in the poets' minds.

In his introduction to *La Liberté guide nos pas*, Emmanuel writes of an 'immense passion du néant' (p. 79) which dominated the war period. What he says here gives an interesting insight into his view of the metaphysical basis of Nazism:

> [L'homme] se sent injustifié dans l'absolu: d'où l'immense passion du néant, partout affichée comme la seule métaphysique assez absurde pour renchérir sur le non-sens de la vie; d'où la tragique dépense de forces, qui fait éclater la vieille humanité, déchiquette les civilisations, et risque de laisser pantelante l'espèce. (p. 79)

In the work of Marcenac, there is strong evidence that he viewed Nazism, similarly, as a philosophy of the absurd. In 'Un jour viendra', he refers to his Nazi enemies as 'les fils de la terreur et de l'absurde' (*CF* 39). In his 'Manifeste de l'école d'Oradour' he takes Oradour as a symbol not only of Nazi inhumanity but also of a continuing absurdity. Oradour makes a nonsense of any notion of victory 'de tout le poids de son néant' (*CF* 14). In Marcenac's poetry, the enemy makes a habitat of the very symbols which remind us of our meaninglessness: 'le néant', 'la mort' and 'le vide'. France and its allies fight to 'rendre à leur néant les serviteurs de l'ombre' (*CF* 52); the executioners evoked in 'La mémoire des morts' 'préféraient au jour ce néant sans entraves' (*CF* 65) and in 'Voici leur tour d'être traqués', the enemies try to don a mask 'pour boucher le vide de leur face' (*CF* 50).

The main way in which Nazism promoted the meaninglessness of human existence was in embarking upon the relentless destruction of human life which has been termed, in Chapter II, a death-cult. The next section examines this, and its counteraction in the poetry, through an optic of absurdity.

3. AN AFFIRMATION OF LIFE

The one facet of our absurdity that it is useless to deny is the fact that our existence is finite. Faced daily during wartime with the presence and sometimes even the immediate prospect of death, Resistance poets were more than commonly aware that, as Char puts it in *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, 'nous sommes des malades sidéraux incurables' (*FM* 106). Desnos, who died in 1945 after being liberated from Flöha

concentration camp, wrote before his arrest that the spectre of death is 'le valet de tout homme vivant' (*DA* 180). While never denying the inevitability of death, Resistance poets resolutely removed its coefficient of tragedy.

We have already witnessed in a different context how our fatal transience was welcomed by Char and Seghers, who saw it as the motivator of our exhilarating potential for movement and change.

The frustrated desire for eternal life is transformed into a passionate wish to make rich and meaningful the life that we have. Something of this transfiguration of despair is conveyed by Emmanuel in *Jour de colère*: 'Nous tremblons de mourir et nous tremblons de vivre / nous sommes pour toujours en-deçà de la Mort' (p. 42). Tardieu gives a similar response to the reminder given by the 'incarnation' in his poem that we are beings limited and bound by time:

> S'il n'est plus rien qui soit demain;
> quelle injure aux mille complices
> du grand fantôme souterrain,
> à travers mensonges et supplices,
> que s'efforcer vers l'être humain
> pendant le bref éclair du jour (*JP* 69)

Tardieu's reference to 'mensonges et supplices' remind us that such affirmations of life were taking place against the violent backdrop of Nazism. I would refer the reader back to Chapter II for the references to the Nazi cult of death that were listed there. The constant reminders in the poetry of the richness and joy of life were at the same time a revolt against the absurd brevity of human existence and a vital part of the struggle against Nazism.

Certainly, there is a wealth of references in the poetry to the Resistance struggle as a fight to celebrate life. Take, for example, Marcenac's 'La France héroïque et ses alliés':

> Nos soldats sont ceux des hommes
> Ils disent vie bonheur tendresse
> Dans toutes les langues du monde (*CF* 51)

In 'Les fleurs de Buchenwald', the battle Marcenac speaks of (and fights in) is for a victory over death:

Nous défendions un bien commun à tous les hommes
Nous n'opposions la mort au visage des ennemis
Qu'au nom du jour où l'ennemi
Aura perdu le visage de l'homme
(...)
(Car c'est aussi pour vous que nous combattons Allemands
Pour vous donner notre victoire sur la mort) (*CF* 60-1)

Madeleine Riffaud, who took part in the armed Resistance, describes the execution of some of her fellow partisans as if it were, paradoxically, their final refusal of death:

Le dernier grand refus
Qui crispe tout leur corps
- Refus! Refus! dernier refus
Le "non" de tout leur corps
Devant la mort![20]

Eluard expresses the Resistance similarly, as a battle to highlight that 'vivre et faire vivre est au fond de nous tous' (*ARA; OC* I 1259). Placing himself at the very heart of the struggle, he writes:

Nous allons imposer l'espoir
Nous allons imposer la vie
Aux esclaves qui désespèrent (*ARA; OC* I 1259)

The threat of Nazism was, as he saw it, to reduce to nothing the potential richness of life. In 'On te menace' (*ARA*) he warns that 'la vie est vaine / Si de tout ne sort la vie' (*OC* I 1258). And again, his descriptions of Resisters centre around their combative will to exalt life as something precious and meaningful. Thus, Gabriel Péri is said to have died with 'ses bras ouverts à la vie' (*ARA; OC* I 1262), Resisters are described collectively as 'des guerriers selon l'espoir / Selon le sens de la vie' in 'Les Armes de la douleur' (*OC* I 1228), and those writers and partisans killed during the Resistance are celebrated as 'des hommes sûrs de la vie' (*OC* I 1286). Exemplifying the same hope and optimism that he demands from others, Eluard writes, in 1941, of the fight being over and the battle *for* life being finally won:

Et la bêtise et la démence
Et la bassesse firent place
A des hommes frères des hommes
Ne luttant plus contre la vie
A des hommes indestructibles (*OC* I 1063)

For Eluard it was the wish to 'faire vivre' and the belief that 'vivre perpétue' (*ARA; OC* I 1275) which gave his poetry right of entry into the Resistance. His

means of creating, exemplifying and affirming the joyful meaningfulness of existence was poetry itself. The following lines express most succinctly Eluard's view of the Resistance as a celebration of life:

> Il n'y a rien d'essentiel à détruire
> Qu'un homme après un homme
> Il n'y a rien d'essentiel à créer
> Que la vie tout entière en un seul corps
> Que le respect de la vie et des morts
> Qui sont morts pour la vie (*ARA; OC* I 1256-7)

They are taken from a poem entitled, significantly, 'D'un seul poème entre la vie et la mort'.

The same belief in poetry as a necessary affirmation of life can be found in the work of Desnos. Hélène Larouche Davis writes that his poetry is dominated by 'l'idée dionysiaque de la vie qui naît de la mort'.[21] While a strong awareness of death underlies certain of his poems (see in particular 'Fantôme' (*DA* 180) and 'Aujourd'hui je me suis promené' (*DA* 176)), Desnos constantly exhorts his readers to grab hold of life and live it to the full: 'Le jour est bon à vivre et l'heure est bonne à prendre' (*DA* 202). His wartime poetry is an expression of his indomitable optimism, and the poems themselves a sure measure of the energy and vitality with which it is possible to greet life. In his 'Art poétique', published posthumously, Desnos demands and offers the 'joie de vivre' that is expressed and exemplified by the poem. The poem itself is narrator:

> Sorti des murailles à mots de passe
> Par le travers des gueules
> Par le travers des dents
> Beau temps
> Pour les hommes dignes de ce nom
> Beau temps pour les fleuves et les arbres
> Beau temps pour la mer
> Restent l'écume et la boue
> Et une main dans la mienne
> Et la joie de vivre
> Je suis le vers témoin du souffle de mon maître. (*DA* 205-6)

Chapter IV illustrates just how poetic expression embodies an exhilarating affirmation of life.

Reminders of the beauty, the joy and the simple pleasures of life were an essential part both of the Resistance battle-cry and of the poets' general revolt against the human condition. In opposition to the absurdist view, promoted by Nazism, that life is meaningless, the poets insisted that life is both rich and potentially meaningful. The question of how to go about creating the meaningfulness of our existence in Forms. the following section, which examines the poets' view of our relations with the outside world.

III CIRCUMSTANTIALITY. THE RECIPROCITY OF SELF AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

> En face, ceux qui définissent l'homme en prenant les coutumes qui leur sont commodes pour des traits de sa nature. L'homme fera toujours la guerre. L'inégalité est la loi de la nature, etc. (...) Cela traîne finalement, brouillé, mêlé dans toutes les consciences politiques: l'homme comme espèce biologique avec son destin d'espèce - l'homme comme réalité positive à déterminer d'après des expériences. (...) Contre cela, établir la réalité humaine, la condition humaine, l'être-dans-le-monde et son être- en-situation.
> (Sartre)[22]

This section traces the concept of man's circumstantiality, which denotes the idea that to exist authentically (to become or to create ourselves) is to be in constant confrontation with our circumstances (the world outside ourselves). One of the most crucial points about existence that is made in Resistance poetry, the notion of circumstantiality argues strongly against an essentialist account of man. For instead of proposing that man has a given identity, it shows man pursuing his identiy in his relations with the outside world. In *Autobiographies*, Emmanuel describes himself as a 'foyer de relations' (p. 21) who confirms his presence by reflecting and refracting the surrounding world:

> Je veux être libre: faire ma vie. Mais ma vie ne commence ni ne finit en moi-même: le peu que j'en sais me la montre liée. Je suis un foyer de relations, (...) le centre d'une double pulsion, centripète et centrifuge; c'est dans l'équilibre de ces forces, convergentes les unes, rayonnantes les autres, que je confirme une présence à chaque instant remise en question. (p. 21)

The following descriptions of man forging an identity in connecting with the outside world further constitutes the poets' resistance to absurdity. For one of the facets of absurdity which is alluded to in the poetry is a sense of isolation that derives from the fact that, as Emmanuel puts it, man is thrust amongst circumstances 'sans leur être autre chose que contigu' (*Aut* 20). The poetry both expresses this sense of isolation and formulates a resistance to it, proposing that we overcome our inherent lack of justification within the world by creating connections between it and ourselves. In so doing, we create a complementary meaningfulness for ourselves and for the world around us, thus combating the potentially tragic absurdity of both.

The two distinguishable categories of circumstance referred to here are concrete phenomena and historical events, both of which are considered in Resistance poetry as barriers and gateways to man's authentic existence. These are considered in turn.

1. CONCRETE PHENOMENA

Homme et terre s'y sont faits -
Et c'est tout ce que l'on sait (Guillevic; *T* 62)

Central to an awareness of absurdity is a sense of our inherent isolation from the concrete phenomena that surround us; an awareness of being there, for no apparent reason; situated within and yet of a different order from the natural world. The difference lies above all in our being conscious of our existence and therefore conscious of our separation from everything that is not us.

Our separateness and the naked fact of being there are evoked indirectly by Frénaud in a poem entitled 'Dans la crique'.[23] The poem describes a small sailing ship, moored in a bay, surrounded by steep cliffs and rocks. It is engulfed in hostile surroundings which bear down upon it threateningly without, however, invading its separateness:

> Inexorable paroi, les rochers noirs.
> Les nuages ont comblé tous les seins de la nuit.
> Le vent tranquille dans les avalanches de pierres.
> Il est là. (*RM* 80)

In the midst of an environment described as vast, unruly and chaotic, the tiny ship

remains steadfastly, fearlessly still:

> Chez elle la nature va et va; elle est ivre.
> Et s'acclame en sa roue hurlante, la géante.
> (...) Ce petit navire,
> sans crainte dans la nuit, son angoissé sourire. (*RM* 80)

The personification of the ship, effected throughout the poem, encourages us to read this as an allegory of the human condition: to be there, placed within and yet separate from the rest of the natural world.

Although in this poem the ship's ability to assume and maintain its separateness is presented almost as an act of courage, in others Frénaud clearly wishes to be able to relinquish the consciousness that distinguishes him from the rest of the world. In 'Gisant', for example, he expresses a desire to be reborn as part of his environment, with no feelings and with no dreams:

> Si je dois renaître, que ce soit
> dans du bois bien mort,
> ou dans de la neige
> parce qu'elle fond,
> ou dans de la pierre
> qui jamais ne rêve. (*RM* 36)

For Emmanuel, too, the consciousness of his separation is so painful that he sometimes wishes for the peaceful, infinite inexistence of the objects around him:

> O être pierre pierre au fond de la durée
> au centre de gravité de tout le sang
> dormir! (*JC* 34)

The separateness of the outside world clearly poses a threat to these two poets. The wish to become as wood or stone or snow is the same despairing death-wish that Ponge calls 'le suicide ontologique' (*Pr* 166). Emmanuel recognizes both the temptation and the danger of abandoning consciousness in order to relieve the suffering caused by a sense of separation. In the same poem quoted above he equates the wish to become as inexistent as stone with a wish to destroy man and remove all traces of humanity:

> briser l'homme contre un regard réunissant
> arche de superbe et froide inexistence
> Ce qui est avant l'homme et Ce qui est
> quand dieu même ne saura plus ce qu'était l'homme (*JC* 35)

This danger is expressed even more clearly in a section where he describes stone as the enemy of flesh and blood:

> Pierre ennemie du sang et de la chair
> avec la cruauté panique d'une chair
> qui se veut pierre aveuglément et qui refuse
> la vraie chair déchirée où fume le limon (*JC* 33)

The danger of objects, hinted at obliquely by Frénaud and Emmanuel, is voiced directly in Guillevic's work. In *Terraqué* in particular, the poet is clearly on his guard against a latent threat in the world around him. Objects as familiar as chairs, apples and cupboards are threatening because, in the first place, their separateness and their unconscious immortality remind the poet of his own inescapable mortality.

Some of the early poems of *Terraqué* draw a direct link between Guillevic's ambivalent attitude towards objects and his fear of death. In 'Choses', which opens the collection, an oak cupboard represents both larder and coffin:

> L'armoire était de chêne
> Et n'était pas ouverte.
>
> Peut-être il en serait tombé des morts,
> Peut-être il en serait tombé du pain.
>
> Beaucoup de morts.
> Beaucoup de pain. (p. 17)

At times the poet warns against objects much the way that a parent utters cautionary tales to children; with Guillevic, the bogey is invariably death:

> Cette pomme sur la table,
> Laisse-la jusqu'à ce soir.
>
> Va! les morts n'y mordront pas
> Qui ne mangent pas le pain,
> Qui ne lèchent pas le lait. (p. 27)

Guillevic's work expresses not only a fear, but also a singular jealousy of inanimate objects. First, he envies their immortality. In 'Les Rocs', for example, he writes:

> Ils n'ont pas le besoin du rire
> Ou de l'ivresse
>
> Ils ne font pas brûler
> Du soufre dans le noir.
>
> Car jamais
> Ils n'ont craint la mort. (pp. 78-9)

Guillevic's jealousy of objects clearly results from their careless longevity, which throws his own mortality into bitter relief:

> Pleurs en chair de lombric
> De l'humus au calcaire
>
> A vivre longuement
> Comme le bois se fait (p. 65)

Second, he is jealous of the lack of consciousness which makes objects entirely independent. He describes the enviable self-sufficiency of rocks:

> La danse est en eux,
> La flamme est en eux,
> Quand bon leur semble.
>
> Ce n'est pas un spectacle devant eux,
> C'est en eux.
> (...)
> Et la joie
> Leur vient d'eux seuls,
>
> Que la mer soit grise
> Ou pourrie de bleue. (pp. 80-1)

or of a chair:

> Elle ne veut plus rien,
> Elle ne doit plus rien,
> Elle a son propre tourbillon,
> Elle se suffit. (p. 19)

The objects' lack of consciousness and their self-sufficiency are qualities that the poet finds both enviable and disorientating. What he fears is that since they are unconscious of the world outside themselves they are naturally indifferent to his presence. They exclude his presence. And this exclusion reminds him painfully of the fact that there is no necessary connection between ourselves and the outside world. The objects around us are indifferent to us: they have no need of us.

This bitter sense of exclusion informs many of the poems in *Terraqué* and *Exécutoire*. The poet is hounded by what he sees as a complicity in the natural world from which man's presence is excluded. In the following poem, for example, Guillevic describes a 'respect' given to horses by the very roads on which they walk. People have no part to play in the necessary symbiosis of horse and road:

On dirait que les routes,
Que même les rues des villes
Estiment leur pas.

Et c'est dans le respect
Qu'en est transmis le bruit.

Jusqu'aux étages où sont les hommes
Qui n'ont que faire. (*T* 26)

We can see the same almost paranoid fear of a conspiracy of objects in a poem where Guillevic wonders that the same rain that swells tomatoes should cover towns and their inhabitants in mud:

C'est étrange pourtant que ce soit la pluie
Dans les tomates gonflées de rouge et de bien être

Et dans la boue des villes
Qu'on sent partout sur soi (*T* 28)

Collectively or singly, objects reject the poet. In everything around him he senses a refusal of his presence:

Avoir tout contre soi
Le jaune de la pierre,
Le poids de la muraille
Et le chant des vapeurs
Sur les tuiles des toits. (*T* 109)

Obsessional references recur throughout Guillevic's poetry to walls and to the impenetrable surface of things that deny him acess. In the following poem, as throughout his work, the paucity of descriptive phrases and the tautness of the language help convey the impervious nature of the surfaces observed:

La maison d'en face
Et son mur de briques

La maison de briques
Et son ventre froid.

La maison de briques
Où le rouge a froid. (*T* 32)

That Guillevic wishes for access is obvious. What he is searching for is the assurance that there is something similar in man and object, or that there is some necessary connection between the two:

Voir le dedans des murs
Ne nous est pas donné.

On a beau les casser,
Leur façade est montrée.

Bien sûr que c'est pareil
En nous et dans les murs,

Mais voir
Apaiserait. (*E* 219)

There is a strong similarity between these poems by Guillevic and Tardieu's 'Les dieux étouffés' (*Le Témoin invisible*), where the poet demands access to the heart of objects that deny him entry:

Opacité des murs, silence
tombé sur d'obscures clameurs,
temps où sombre la patience,
soleil de plomb sur la douleur
et les ténèbres de soi-même,
formes de fer, masques de feu,
rochers refermés sur les dieux
ruisselants de pluie et de pleurs,
ouvrez, ouvrez à qui les aime,
ouvrez vos portes dont je meurs! (*FC* 43)

Like Guillevic, Tardieu expresses a certain fear and resentment of things unmarked by human agency. One of the key words in *Jours pétrifiés* is 'abîme'. For Tardieu, the abyss signifies that which is unknown and unidentified. It is the gap between man and the surrounding world: the same absurd lack of connection from which Guillevic clearly suffers.

This is especially evident in a group of poems entitled 'Fleurs et abîme'. The flowers are at the same time part of an identified, known world and a reminder that the outside world is, for the largest part, an unknown quantity which eludes our understanding: 'Sous les fleurs que je sais il n'est pas de prairie / mais le lait noir de l'abîme inconnu' (p. 21). The threat of the abyss is revealed more clearly in a poem where a young girl, displaying a careless indifference to her surroundings, is warned by the poet of the menace of a reciprocal indifference:

Indolente demoiselle
qui passes près des fleurs,
entends tonner l'abîme!
La foudre des origines
ravive les couleurs. (p. 23)

Again, the indifferent independence and self-sufficiency of the outside world is

threatening because the poet feels unjustified or inessential in relation to it. As Noulet points out in her study of Tardieu's work: 'L'autre est indifférent. Donc l'un souffre de sa propre disponibilité, de son indétermination, et de sa non-désignation.'[24] In 'Six mots rayés nuls', Tardieu looks at his surroundings and asks:

> Est-ce pour moi ce jour ces tremblantes prairies
> ce soleil dans les yeux ce gravier encor chaud
> ces volets agités par le vent, cette pluie
> sur les feuilles, ce mur sans drame, cette oiseau? (*JP* 11)[25]

To answer no, or even not to care (like the 'indolente demoiselle'), is to accept the very lack of justification which limits our presence in the world so intolerably. By far the better course, taken by all of the poets examined here, is to forge a necessary connection between ourselves and the objects that we encounter: to will and create a 'drama' in which the self and the outside world can both play essential roles. In this way our consciousness, described initially as the curse that tells of our difference from the rest of the world, is transformed into the strength that allows us to exalt our difference in an imaginative recreation of the world. In so doing, we give ourselves the upper hand. As Ponge puts it in *Proêmes*:

> Il n'est pas tragique pour moi de ne pas pouvoir expliquer (ou comprendre) le Monde.
> D'autant que mon pouvoir poétique (ou logique) doit m'ôter tout sentiment d'infériorité à son égard.
> Puisqu'il est en mon pouvoir - métalogiquement - de le *refaire*.
> (p. 175)

Ponge refuses to concede that because the natural world is separate from us it is therefore necessarily mysterious and we necessarily absurd. We should, he argues, congratulate ourselves on the fact that, unique amongst beings, we possess the means to express the outside world. This should rid us of all feelings of inferiority in regard to nature. Natural objects have no natural merit, according to Ponge. They only attain merit and become worthy of consideration when transformed and recreated: 'J'aime mieux un objet *fait de* l'homme (le poème, la création métalogique) qu'un objet sans mérite de la Nature' (*Pr* 169). All of his poetry can be seen as an attempt to exorcise ontological doubt by putting man in his rightful place: 'Il faut remettre l'homme à sa

place dans la nature: elle est assez honorable. Il faut replacer l'homme à son rang dans la nature: il est assez haut' (*Pr* 196).

Emmanuel, too, sees a solution to absurdity in the creation of poems in which the individual, instead of being excluded from the world, is restored as its centre - in which 'sa vie n'est (...) plus un ensemble de hasards et de rencontres avec le monde; elle est l'activité supérieure par laquelle le monde s'imagine et se connaît' (*UM* 65).

Resisting the temptation to see our lives as insignificant in relation to the world outside is an essential part of the poets' commitment to man. Their resistance takes the form of recreating the phenomenal world, and removing the threat of its terrible accidental quality. In poetry everything is expressed, therefore everything is human, and, again in contrast to the outside world, everything is necessarily connected.

There is every suggestion that it is in an expressive recreation of the outside world (exemplified in poetry) that we realise the ability to create ourselves. When Ponge, for example, emphasizes our need for self-determination, he outlines that the way in which man becomes his own creator is by expressing himself through (and against) everything else: 'Il faut que l'homme, tout comme d'abord le poète, trouve sa loi, sa clef, son dieu en lui-même. Qu'il veuille l'exprimer mort et fort, envers et contre tout. C'est-à-dire s'exprimer' (*Pr* 161-2). Char states that we are defined through the communication of things in poetry:

> En poésie c'est seulement à partir de la communication et de la libre-disposition de la totalité des choses entre elles à travers nous que nous nous trouvons engagés et définis, à même d'obtenir notre forme originale et nos propriétés probatoires.
> (*FM* 70)

Tardieu's *Figures* is both example and exegesis of most of these points. In it, Tardieu pays homage to different art-forms by recreating them in language. The main theme which connects this collection of texts is the artist's ability to transform reality through creation. His own texts transform the works of art (themselves transformations of the outside world) by giving them verbal equivalences.

Tardieu believes that the artist's response to the outside world's inherent lack of reason or meaning is privileged. It betokens 'une sorte de fierté métaphysique' (p.12).

While artists recognize the lack of meaning which underlies our existence within the world, their 'metaphysical pride' causes them to set about defying it. They do this by creating works in which every detail, man included, functions as a significant part of an overall order. In the development of art, he says, we can follow 'une puissante montée de l'homme vers un moment idéal qui serait celui de la soumission totale du monde à l'esprit' (p. 13). This is what Tardieu celebrates in his study of different artists.

What he admires most in Cézanne, for example, is the effort made to 'rapprocher peu à peu l'une de l'autre les rebelles et rivales évidences du monde sensible et de la pensée impalpable' (p. 26). The alignment of man and world is made in Cézanne's work through colour, which Tardieu describes as 'le carrefour magique et mouvant où se rencontrent l'âme qui voit et les présences qui sont vues' (p. 27). As a spectator, Tardieu derives great comfort and assurance from the ability of art to restructure the world. This is best exemplified in a piece entitled 'Corot'. The first part of the text describes a nightmare in which the narrator, with no control over his mind or his perceptions, is forced to admit into his consciousness a whole array of threatening and disconnected sensations. Unruly shapes, colours and sounds all increase his panic. On waking, the narrator seems to enter directly into a Corot landscape. Its artifice affords hims a sense of reassurance. He regains his belief in the stability of objects, for the landscape allows him to apprehend the world as creation: 'la même voix qui commentait le monde en se mêlant à lui me fit comprendre que je pouvais m'avancer sans crainte et que la solidité des choses était grande, malgré leurs douces façons d'agir' (p. 51). Tardieu delights in the fact that within the artist's imaginary landscape, every object is justified, in its own place, and recognized through some deliberated allusion. The vision of reality offered by Corot provides a viable alternative to the nightmare world where the narrator succumbed to violent images of chaos unchecked:

> si chaque objet du jour luit à sa place dans la distance et se fait tendrement connaître par une allusion colorée, (...) alors le regard sans fatigue donne à l'esprit rajeuni la mesure de sa force

> et de son élan, (...) et l'on peut, entraîné par une joie plus proche de la sagesse que du délire, longer les routes de cet autre rêve, de cette terre simple et bonne d'où la menace, le crime et la mort sont exclus. (pp. 52-3)

Contemplating such a work of art is obviously not seen by Tardieu as a way to turn his back on the reality of chaos, disorder and, by strong inference, Nazism, that dominates the nightmare. Corot's mastery of form consoles only in so far as it gives the contemplating mind a measure of its own force and potential.

In Rameau's operas, Tardieu welcomes the fact that 'il n'est rien de secret' (p. 103). Nothing, in other words, is beyond human control: 'chaque forme, chaque heure a sa parole et tout monte du fond de l'éther pour résonner dans la voix des humains' (p. 103). The poet never loses sight of the chaos which underlies the perfect formal control of the opera. He has faith, however, in the logic and intentionality of the performance as sufficient guard against the *perils* of chaos:

> Ils saluent la Raison, ils saluent la Raison, elle règne et compare, et peu importe si ses preuves trop fidèles masquent un gouffre épouvantable: les fumées du volcan, le sol qui tremble sont déjà des périls conjurés s'il suffit du pas des danseurs pour les maintenir à leur place dans les mouvements de ce monde. (pp. 103-4)

With reference to the words of Georges de la Tour, Tardieu makes a parallel between artistic creation and the Original Creation in which Form developed from the swirling vapour of Chaos. La Tour's mysticism, he says derives from a mystery more ancient than Christian or Classical mythology: 'celui de la naissance auguste des Volumes dans la pénombre redoutable du Chaos' (p. 77). The primitive painter, Henri Rousseau, exemplifies for Tardieu this same process of giving form and meaning to a world that possesses neither:

> C'est le commencement, le monde est à repeindre, l'herbe veut être verte, elle a besoin de nos regards; les maisons où l'on vit, les routes où l'on marche, les jardins, les bateaux, les barrières m'attendent pour entrer dans leur vrai paradis. (pp. 113-4)

This primitive Garden of Eden painted by Rousseau and then recreated by Tardieu, cries out for further human contact, demonstrating the never-ending need for us to enter into the heart of things and forge our own contact with them.

It is useful to return here to the poetry of Guillevic. We have seen that Tardieu, through Rousseau and others, portrays the outside world as something imminent that

awaits a human presence. Similarly, Guillevic negates his own assertion that objects are threateningly self-sufficient. The 'threat' is presented instead as an unanswered appeal on the part of objects. Often, Guillevic's poetry is haunted by the notion that the things around him are by no means inert or innocent. They are creditors to whom he owes some unwritten debt:

> Du bouton de la porte aux flots hargneux de l'océan,
> Du métal de l'horloge aux juments des prairies,
> Ils ont besoin.
>
> Ils ne diront jamais de quoi,
> Mais ils demandent
> Avec l'amour mauvais des pauvres qu'on assiste. (*T* 36)

What drives the poet into some guilty sense of indebtedness towards objects is an absence in them, or some frustrated desire:

> Pays de rocaille, pays de broussaille - rocs
> Agacés de sécheresse.
>
> Terre
> Comme une gorge irritée
> Demandant du lait,
> Femme sans mâle, colline
> Comme un fourmilière ébouillantée,
> Terre sans ventre, musique de cuivre.
> Face
> De juge. (*T* 35)

The objects seem to be demanding an ability to connect. Ivy leaves, for example, are 'désireuses d'être dures / A force de toucher' (*T* 109) and roads running down a hill are 'las de n'aller / A rien qui soit chair' (*E* 155). When their desire for connection is ungratified, objects pose themselves as a threat:

> Mais le métal aussi
> Tremble de longue attente
> Vers les canaux de sang.
>
> Et c'est la nuit de bon sommeil
> Qui devient rare. (*T* 70)

Guillevic expresses a fear that the outside world will plot some violent revenge for its uncomfortable disconnection from man. This fear is voiced most powerfully in 'Le Taureau':

> Malgré l'enclos, les écuries,
> Malgré l'eau froide à l'abreuvoir,

Le taureau ne peut pas qu'il n'ait rencontré l'homme
Et qu'il n'ait exploré son corps déshabillé,
Sanglant sous la peau blanche.

- Non pour fermer l'espace où la folie lui vient,
Ni pour goûter une autre chair, d'autres muqueuses,

Mais, comme il signifie,
Pour une raison de dette, inscrite au noir des chairs. (*T* 55)

Guillevic searches for a way to repay the debt that he has inadvertently contracted towards the things around him:

Il ne suffira pas de les mouiller de larmes
Et de jurer qu'on est comme eux.

Il ne suffira pas
De se presser contre eux avec des lèvres bonnes
Et de sourire.

C'est davantage qu'ils veulent pour les mener à bien
Où la vengeance est superflue. (*T* 36)

What the objects require above all from the poet is that he exercise his distinction and express them. Their appeal and their threat to the poet lie in their inability to express themselves. Thus, Guillevic is drawn towards a tree 'qui se tait trop fort' (*T* 73) and horrified by the silence of walls:

Murs sans trompettes - quels cris
Vous jetez dans la chambre,
- Quel silence et quelle horreur. (*T* 47)

As this allusion to the Walls of Jericho suggests, expression alone is the poet's means of penetrating objects and dissolving the walls between himself and them. Through language he gains access to things; by naming them he delivers them of the mute appeal that he imagines is walled into them. In 'Elégies', he writes:

Il y en a qui doivent
Parler, parler encore à l'ombre dans les coins
(...)
Il y en a qui doivent
Longer ce mur, le même,
et tâcher de l'ouvrir
Avec des mots, des noms qu'il s'agit de trouver
Pour tout ce qui n'a pas de forme et pas de nom. (*E* 143)

The terrible fear of his separation almost leaves Guillevic when he is able to draw this connection between self and object through language and so to 'know' and recreate the object under contemplation:

Les mots,
C'est pour savoir.

Quand tu regardes l'arbre et dis le mot: tissu,
Tu crois savoir et toucher même
Ce qui s'y fait.

Tu t'acharnes avec lui
Pour finir à la fraîche,

Et la peur
Est presque partie. (*E* 157)

Connecting the individual, through language, with his or her surroundings serves a double purpose. It makes sense of both the thing that is named and the person who does the naming. The 'knowledge' that Guillevic refers to in the poem just quoted from is knowledge not only of the tree, but also of the self who seeks contact with it.

By the same token, Tardieu emphasises in one poem the need of an object - in this case a house- to have us save it from the abyss of meaninglessness:

Une maison seule s'avance
au bord fleuri de l'abîme;
sa fumée déjà bleuit ...

Ah! Qu'elle soit par les mots
sauvée, avant sa chute
et que sans bruit sans souffrance
elle tombe dans l'esprit! (*JP* 22)

and in another he puts the accent on finding our own identities through naming objects other than ourselves:

Nous approchons. Nous voilà. Nous sommes.
Un silence affreux nous a permis
d'accrocher furtivement le nom des hommes
à tout ce qui fait semblant d'être endormi. (*FC* 31)

Language, which contains aspects of interiority and exteriority, cements a close interdependence of the self and whatever part of the outside world is being expressed. The meaningfulness of one depends entirely on the meaningfulness of the other. As Char writes in *Partage formel*: 'Terre mouvante, horrible, exquise et condition humaine hétérogène se saisissent et se qualifient mutuellement. La poésie se tire de la somme exaltée de leur moire' (*FM* 73).

That the self and the outside world should find themselves locked together thus in meaning is, of course, a complete (if temporary) victory over absurdity. In *Vivre en*

poésie, Guillevic writes that 'la vision absurde du monde arrache aux mots leur centre de gravité' (p. 257). His own recreation of the world in poetry draws man and world alike away from this untenable absurd vision. Witness the lines that end 'Ensemble', where Guillevic evokes a reconciliation of ourselves and the world, which follows from our having constructed and appropriated the world for ourselves:

> Nous construisons le monde
> Qui nous le rendra bien.
>
> Car nous sommes au monde
> Et le monde est à nous. (*T* 110)

There are two final points to be made here. First, it is worth stressing that the poets' concern with expressing the outside world is inseparable from their concern with man. Their emphasis on rendering concrete phenomena into language results from their belief that we only seize our existence by connecting with and recreating our circumstances. Second, it is important to emphasise that the result of the attention paid to things outside ourselves is a sense of our own individuality. These points are argued below.

All of the examples given above bear witness to the poets' firm resolve to be in the world, or to open their consciousness to the things that are outside them. Their will to form a connection between themselves and their circumstances issues from a belief that we cannot exist authentically without this connection. There is evidence of this in Emmanuel's 'A finibus terrae', where a sense of disorientation that he describes results from the fact that he feels ' partout abandonné des choses qui jadis / m'aidaient à devenir familier de moi-même' (*JC* 60). In *Autobiographies* (p. 167), Emmanuel stresses the need to maintain contact with our surroundings. He believes that our distinctive consciousness can only achieve and maintain its equilibrium by fighting against the sense of vertigo given by the surrounding natural universe. We can only form or create ourselves (become familiar with ourselves) in our reformation and recreation of our circumstances.

The poems grouped by Eluard under the title 'Pour vivre ici' (*LO* I) illustrate most conveniently the poet's desire to root his existence in the heart of everyday reality. The first poem of the series, to which particular attention will be paid here, was written

in 1918. The fact that Eluard decided to publish it along with the others in 1940 illustrates the continuity and the evolution of his aim to open his poetry to the circumstances of everyday existence.

Our condition is to be here, surrounded by other presences. To *live* here we must take these presences into our own account, or draw them into our consciousness. Eluard does this through language, which is connoted in the opening poem by fire - an element which burns, melts, metamorphoses and transforms things:

> Je fis un feu, l'azur m'ayant abandonné,
> Un feu pour être son ami,
> Un feu pour m'introduire dans la nuit d'hiver,
> Un feu pour vivre mieux.
>
> Je lui donnai ce que le jour m'avait donné:
> Les forêts, les buissons, les champs de blé, les vignes,
> Les nids et leurs oiseaux, les maisons et leurs clés,
> Les insectes, les fleurs, les fourrures, les fêtes.
>
> Je vécus au seul bruit des flammes crépitantes,
> Au seul parfum de leur chaleur;
> J'étais comme un bateau coulant dans l'eau fermée,
> Comme un mort je n'avais qu'un unique élément.
>
> (*OC* I 1032-3)

He gives to this fire everything that the day had given him: all the disconnected matter of his daily life. Through the agency of fire/language he acts upon this matter, unifies it and transforms it into a unique element which is entirely of his own making. This process of unification is effected formally within the poem. In line 6 we have a definite semantic unity: everything mentioned belongs to a certain natural landscape. This unity is continued in lines 7-8 with the references to the nests and the birds, the insects and the flowers. New elements are introduced, bringing in a note of disorder. However, their semantic dissonance is dissolved by the rhythm of the poem: in line 7, the coupling of houses and keys echoes the coupling of birds and nests. Line 8 continues this rhythmic balancing of contrasting pairs of words. A further amalgam is then achieved by alliteration: the word 'fleurs', which belongs semantically and rhythmically with 'insectes', is drawn into a sensual, phonetic unity with both 'fourrures' and 'fêtes'. This chain of sound leads us back to the word 'feu' which dominates the first stanza, and forward to the world 'flammes' in line 9. Thus, through a particular use of language, the fire catches the different elements,

transforming everything into itself.

Through this transformation into language of disparate parts of his everyday life, the poet himself achieves a sense of unity, as told in line 12. For Eluard, to live here, in the midst of things, is necessarily to make our world more tenable: 'vivre mieux'. This involves taking the circumstances of our lives that assail us with their indifference and appropriating them for ourselves. Again we have the idea that it is by connecting with the things outside us, and making them our own creation, that we can create a new meaning and a necessary place for ourselves:

> Terre vivante dans mon coeur
> Toute distance conjurée
> Le nouveau rythme de moi-même
> Perpétuel
> (...)
> Je suis sur terre et tout s'accommode du feu. (*OC* I 1034)

Having no given identity, we exist only in the relations that we establish with what Char dubs the 'grand externat crématoire':

> N'étant jamais définitivement modelé, l'homme est receleur de son contraire. Ses cycles dessinent des orbes différents selon qu'il est en butte à telle sollicitation ou non. Et les dépressions mystérieuses, les inspirations absurdes, surgies du grand externat crématoire, comment se contraindre à les ignorer? (*FM* 100-1)

To ignore the 'sollicitation' of the world outside us is, I have argued, to limit our existence intolerably. Guillevic, ever aware that 'la menace est toujours là / Dans le dehors' (*T* 81), can never let lapse his attention towards the outside world. Sometimes he seems bullied into this resolution by his fear of death:

> Des milliers d'yeux jaunes luisent dans la forêt
> Me réclament le sang.
>
> Que je ferme un instant les yeux,
> Ils s'abattront sur moi,
> Ils me dissoudront dans l'humus
> Où depuis toujours
> Je sens mon odeur. (*T* 37)

Sometimes he wishes that he could just let be the things outside him:

> Il faudra bien laisser à leur place, à leur sort,
> Ces montagnes de terre,
> (...)
> Il faudra leur laisser de former ce front bleu
> Devant lequel on passe (...) (*T* 59)

In all events, he finds that he cannot assume an indifference to his surroundings. This last poem continues and ends with the lines: 'Nous avec la furie en nous / Et trop de chair.' Our fury is that of beings walled in by our own mortality. The need to connect with things other than ourselves is the need to escape the limitations of interiority. Like the piece of metal he describes in the following poem, Guillevic strains to break out of these limitations:

> Le métal est au centre et hurle sans la rouille
> Et sous la rouille encore il crie:
>
> Qu'il faut aller, que c'est trop long, qu'il veut aller,
> Qu'il est métal (*E* 163)

Unlike the piece of metal, the poet, gifted with consciousness and language, can expand his individual existence by opening out to the outside world. By paying close attention to every detail of the things that surround us, we can embark upon the great adventure of creating a world marked by our individual presence:

> Il faudrait voir sur chaque objet
> Que tout détail est aventure
>
> Pour des milliers
> Qui s'y sont mis
> A faire un monde
>
> A faire un monde
> Contre la mer
>
> Qui est autour,
> Qui n'est pas eux. (*E* 159-60)

Like Guillevic, Tardieu welcomes the presence of the outside world, for it allows him to assume his difference and expand his existence by 'besieging' the world with his own presence:

> Vois le jour à travers les barreaux
> nommés oeil, oreille, narine.
> Ils te tiennent depuis l'enfance.
> Ils sont ta sauvegarde
> Contre tout ce qui cogne aux parois
>
> Mais au-dedans, plus de frontières!
> Vole, nage, marche au bras
> des formes les plus grandes.
> Passe au travers des murs de poudre.
> A toi d'assiéger le monde! (*FC* 48-9)

Here again we have the idea that the adventure of human existence is impossible to seize until we hit against things that are different from ourselves. Tardieu acknowledges the necessity of recognizing his own distinction from the rest of the world:

> Ma différence est ma nécessité!
> Qui que tu sois, terre ou ciel, je m'oppose,
>
> car je pourchasse un ennemi rebelle
> ruse pour ruse et feinte pour feinte! (*FC* 44)

His difference is an essential part of the meaningfulness that he constructs for himself in order to fend off absurdity - his rebel enemy.

This leads into the second, concluding point. At the beginning of this part of the chapter, our separation from the circumstances in which we are placed was taken as a token of our absurdity, and as a reminder of our lack of justification and lack of significance within the world. It was then argued that the poets turned this separateness to their own advantage, using the consciousness that distinguishes us to fashion a world in which man and circumstances are mutually dependent and mutually significant. It is important to underline that both cause and result of this process of creating meaning for ourselves and for the world about us is our separateness - our distinction. What we grasp and define through connecting with things other than ourselves is a precious sense of our uniqueness: our individuality. For, as Tardieu puts it: 'Ma différence est ma nécessité'.

In *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, Char describes the poet as a 'conservateur des infinis visages du vivant' (*FM* 107). By distilling into language the infinite richness, the diversity and the detail of the surrounding world - as does Ponge, most notably, in *Le Parti pris des choses* - these poets give a measure of the infinite richness and diversity of man. Realising their own distinctive individuality in their subjective recreation of things, they give insight into the enormous imaginative potential that each of us has, to stamp the world similarly with our individual presence. This was the claim which Guillevic was to make for poetry in 1965:

> le poète est un homme en contact avec le monde; il l'explore, l'expérimente, il veut y voir clair, il le force à se révéler. Et c'est ainsi, enrichi par cette confrontation, qu'il esquisse, projette, modèle les contours de l'homme, de cet homme qu'a produit le monde. Qui, autant que le poète, a donné à l'homme son visage, qui lui a appris à vivre ce qu'il vit, qui lui a donné autant conscience de ce qu'il vit, qui lui a donné autant conscience de ce qu'il est dans le monde et de ce à quoi il peut aspirer?[26]

Within the larger body of Resistance poetry, the work of Guillevic, Ponge, Char and Tardieu in particular stands out for the apparently impertinent emphasis that it lays on describing concrete phenomena. Granted, however, that the end result of such descriptions is to express the complexity and the distinctiveness of an individual's existence within the world, I would argue that they, too, function as an important challenge to a totalitarian concept of man. This point about individuality is developed in part IV of this chapter, which examines the notion of *fraternité* as it is presented in Resistance poetry.

2. EVENTS

> Il nous devient impossible d'assister au moindre événement sans que s'ébranlent en nous les affects, les sentiments, les idées, qui soutiennent notre identité singulière. (Emmanuel; *Aut* 227)

What holds true of the natural world about us also holds true of the social, political and historical world in which we are situated. Political events are as basic a part of our circumstances as the pebbles on the ground on which we walk, or the trees, walls and houses we can see through the window. Chapter I demonstrated that it was a new, 'total' conception of man that helped effect a change towards committed poetry in the 1930s; any account of man in his totality had to concern itself with man as a political and historical being. I refer the reader back to this chapter for evidence of Resistance poets' desire not to remain indifferent to the social and historical dimension of our existence within the world. This is aptly summarised by Emmanuel in *Autobiographies*: 'Depuis la guerre d'Espagne (...) j'avais compris que l'homme d'aujourd'hui, fût-il poussé par le seul besoin d'approfondir sa vie intérieure, ne peut s'abstraire de l'histoire' (p. 227).

It would be useful here briefly to compare and contrast the two different attitudes to man that were referred to in Chapter I.

In *Destins du poète* (1937), Roger Secrétain warned that the individual was in danger of becoming absorbed in a vast social system that had been extending its influence since the end of the First World War:

> Il y eut (...) sur la mer sociale des vagues longues et profondes qui entraînèrent l'individu comme un fétu et lui donnèrent (...) le sentiment de solidarité avec les autres individus, avec des masses entières d'individus. (...) Le progrès s'imposa à nous dans nos moeurs, dans nos maisons, venant parfois de très loin, et jusque dans notre vie intérieure. Nous sentîmes brusquement que les inventions scientifiques et la croissance des sociétés débordaient notre existence morale, la menaçaient de modifications et d'altérations qui équivaudraient bientôt à l'anéantissement de la personnalité. (p. 9)

Secrétain argues that poets have a responsibility to respond to the crisis constituted by this conflict of the individual and social dimensions of man: 'le corps social, qui pèse chaque jour davantage sur l'individu, leur impose (...) une crise de responsabilité' (pp. 62-3). He claims that the poet's duty is to present an image of man that he himself believes is eternal and unchanging: something that lasts beyond and above the changing social and political circumstances:

> la notion de l'humain échappe aux circonstances. Quels que soient le mensonge et la corruption, quelle que soit la responsabilité des hommes dans le désordre et la misère, cette action peut être saisie dans sa pureté et définie dans sa profondeur. (p. 43)

It is in promoting an eternal image of man, seen in the works of writers as different as Dante, Shakespeare and Tolstoy, that poets can best prevent the annihilation of the individual. In preserving the independence of the individual, they protect the independence of poetry, too, from the 'tintamarre du siècle' (p. 74).

Both Chapter I and the earlier part of this present chapter make it evident that Resistance poets had a very different idea of their responsibilities to man and to poetry. They started, however, from the same premise as Secrétain: that individuals were in danger of being absorbed - of losing their distinction - in the great political and social machinery surrounding them. In an article entitled 'Vers une poésie sociale', Seghers

writes:

> La poésie et le social se rencontrent dans l'homme. Elle doit, comme la foi, prendre l'homme dans sa totalité et l'exhausser. Le temps agglomère les éléments humains. Il les réunit et les comprime. Il construit avec ces matériaux, de grandioses cités silencieuses. Au poète d'animer ces villes semblables à des sépulcres. (...) Il faut sauver l'homme en danger.[27]

Through the quirkiness of this text we can see the same ideas that were presented more straightforwardly by Secrétain. Time, or history, lumps people together in a group which comprises individuals but excludes their individuality. Historical events, constructed by this agglomeration of people, are 'de grandioses cités silencieuses': again, the individual's presence is of little consequence in relation to these 'cités'. The phrase 'l'homme dans sa totalité' refers at the same time to all humankind and to the total experience of each individual within the group. For Seghers, the most precious value that is common to all humanity is our internal solitude, or our affective and intellectual individuality. The problem with collective events is that, much like the objects described in the previous section of this chapter, they exclude our individual presence. The poet's duty, as Seghers sees it, is to 'animate' these collective circumstances, by voicing them. The poet thus describes a means of reconquering our individuality - not, as Secrétain would have it, by ignoring collective events - but by seeking to impose our individual presence upon them in reworking them.

Our sense of separation from the outside world and of the lack of connection between it and ourselves is aggravated when these outside circumstances are political. Our political and historical situation is no more of our own choosing than the natural surroundings in which we find ourselves. The fact that our lives are so clearly affected and limited by our political situation makes our disconnection from it all the more obviously untenable.

Chapter II detailed the poets' expressions of a personal and general sense of disorientation and isolation that was felt after the defeat of France. The loss of *le pays réel* - a political event - was taken as a bewildering assault on the poets' personal identities. Witness, as a reminder of this, Emmanuel's 'A finibus terrae', which expresses the poet's sense of separation or foreignness, made more acute by an

uncanny change that has taken place in his surroundings:

> Rejeté par mon sang sur la Terre étrangère
> où nulle chair n'a plus de raison d'être un corps
> dépaysé d'être homme encore sur ses bords
> où tout se hâte d'oublier sa forme humaine,
> partout abandonné des choses qui jadis
> m'aidaient à devenir familier de moi-même. (*JC* 64)

Through the defeat and the Collaboration, France was denied the right to fight and to construct her own destiny. Mirrored in these national images of impotence, individual citizens felt condemned, similarly, to have their lives led for them. Such a loss of control over events was experienced, as we have seen, as a withering or atrophying of authentic existence.

There is reference in this present chapter to Resistance poets' expression of the execution of hostages at Châteaubriant. Chapter IV and the commentary which concludes this thesis illustrate much more fully how the poets rework in language some of the salient events of the Resistance period. One of the important functions of expressing these collective events was, as I have argued here, to remove from them an indifference and a gratuitousness which threatened to deflect what Emmanuel calls 'notre identité singulière' (*Aut* 227).

IV *FRATERNITE*. THE RECIPROCITY OF SELF AND OTHERS

> L'existence n'est qu'une succession de solidarités
> blanches ou noires, fortuites ou non. (Char; *RBS* 132)

Other people, as well as things or events, constitute the circumstances of our existence. This section examines how our identities are created through the relations we forge with others.

I have argued that a sense of isolation is central to our awareness of absurdity: a token of ontological annihilation. We are separated, not only from our natural surroundings, or from the collective events that rock our existence, but from other existants. The following pages look at how Resistance poets propose that this isolation can be overcome by a bond of *fraternité* that is welded between people. In privileging the term *fraternité* above its synonyms, 'community' or 'solidarity', I am making deliberate reference to the French Republican motto, and arguing again the

closeness of the link between the poets' defence of France and their defence of man.

The battle against isolation is conducted on two distinct but inseparable fronts in the poetry: it is, at the same time, a battle waged on absurdity and a battle waged on totalitarian Nazism.

1. A FUNDAMENTAL NEED FOR COMMUNITY

> No polarity of human existence is more deeply pervasive of our being than the polarity between the privacy and the community of existence.[28]

In an interview conducted in 1979, in which Marcenac traces the development of his ideas on poetry back to the Resistance period, he says that what associates his poetry most clearly with the work of other contemporary poets is a 'passage du "je" au "nous"'. He finds the same essential theme in all the poetry he reads: 'l'appel à un combat contre la solitude, l'idée que l'homme est un être plural.'[29]

The need to connect with other people, like the need to connect with the circumstances outside ourselves, is primarily of an ontological order. Most poets of the time expressed the idea that we can never realise our existence fully in isolation from a community of people. This fundamental need in man is built naturally into an ethic of *fraternité*. This refers to the fact of belonging, willingly, to a community, each member of which has needs, desires and rights akin to our own - the most important of which is our individual freedom.

In Eluard's poetry, solitude is cast as an impoverished existence. Bergez points out that for Eluard, solitude is more than simply being deprived of another person's presence: 'elle est en même temps et surtout ce qui semble vider l'être et le monde de leur substance: la privation de relations avec autrui est privation de tout contact avec soi-même et avec le monde'.[30]

After his separation from Gala long before the war, Eluard wrote that 'la solitude falsifie toute présence' (*La Vie immédiate; OC* I 370). Alone, the poet is aware of his own meaninglessness in the face of a foreign, hostile, world. In solitude, Eluard experiences a kind of ontological annihilation, which explains his frequent association

of solitude and death. As he puts it in *Le livre ouvert* I: 'La seule mort c'est solitude' (*OC* I 1013). Again, the idea underlying 'Mourir' is that to live alone, reflected in one's own image, is to live a half existence. Reflecting, narcissistically, a sterile image of himself, the poet feels his existence dissolve into something akin to death:

> Moi mon image est fanée
> Unique à sa propre lumière
> J'oublie et je suis oublié
>
> Entre les murs l'ombre est entière
> Et je descends dans mon miroir
> Comme un mort dans la tombe ouverte (*OC* I 1021)

For Eluard, communication - the fulcrum of our individual and social existence - begins with the primary act of seeing and being seen. When this primary link between people is severed, the individual is condemned to the same morbid solitude as that described above:

> Un nuage couvre le sol
> Un nuage couvre le ciel
> Soudain la lumière m'oublie
> La mort seule demeure entière
> Je suis une ombre je ne vois plus (*OC* I 1026)

While the experience of being with others opens the poet's sensibilities to the rest of the outside world, solitude closes him off from the world and leaves him prey to a sense of emptiness and exclusion. This is particularly evident in the two poems, 'Avec toi' and 'Sans toi' (*Le Lit la table*). In 'Avec toi', the world is described as the poet's plaything, there for the taking; deprived of the other's presence, however, as in 'Sans toi', the poet is assailed by a sense of stagnation; it is as if the world closes in upon itself to exclude his presence. According to Eluard, there is a fundamental ontological need in each of us for the presence of other people. As Bergez puts it, 'la relation à l'autre est bien en effet pour Eluard l'expérience inaugurale de l'être: il a valeur ontologique'.[31] In 'Vivre' (*LO* I), Eluard accepts that his own presence is constituted through the presence of others:

> Présence ma seule vertu dans chaque main visible
> La seule mort c'est solitude
> De délice en furie de furie en clarté
> Je me construis entier à travers tous les êtres (*OC* I 1013)

Only in knowing himself seen by others, can the poet see his own existence objectified.

Seghers seems to subscribe to the same belief that the individual can never be realised in isolation. For him, the totality of man consists also in the self completed by a community. The last of his 'Trois poèmes intérieurs', dominated by reflexive verbs, illustrates the fruitlessness of an individual's search for self-realisation in the absence of other people:

> Je me suis demandé
> Qui de moi était l'autre
> Si c'était celui-là
> Qui en vain se cherchait
> (...)
> Qui criait à l'écho
> Pour s'entendre crier
> (...)
> Je n'ai plus de maison
> De sens ni de cité (*DP* 69)

Again we have the idea that when the search for self is directed inwards, towards the individual, without being directed concurrently outwards, towards the community, the self appears as something incomplete, without significance.

Audisio's experiences in the German military prison at Fresnes taught him the same lesson: we are not so much monads amongst others as beings whose reality is constituted through communion with others. In prison he understood that distinct, but inseparable from our lives as individuals, there is a vital part of our existence which he terms 'une réalité collective' (*FF* 55). The reality to which he refers is not only 'un total d'individus' (*FF* 55), united by common circumstances. It is something more pervasive of our being than this, as he illustrates in a phrase that he attributes to Malraux: 'Ce n'est pas à gratter sans fin l'individu qu'on finit par rencontrer l'homme' (*FF* 35). In other words, to grasp any total experience of existence, one must consider oneself not only as an individual, but as 'un être collectif' (*FF* 55).

Emmanuel's expression, 'Le Je universel',[32] which he applied to the subjective narrative voice of Eluard's poetry, also perfectly defines the self as Eluard conceives of it. There is evidence that Eluard feels so strengthened by the idea that he is a

collective being that even his solitude becomes tenable. Witness, for example, a poem written in 1939 (*LO* I) where even in isolation, the poet considers himself as a point of intersection in a network of feelings, words and looks. All of these constitute an overall human reality which is reflected in and refracted by the individual:

> Aucun homme n'est invisible
> Aucun homme n'est plus oublié en lui-même
> Aucune ombre n'est transparente
>
> Je vois des hommes là où il n'y a que moi
> Mes soucis sont brisés par des rires légers
> J'entends des mots très doux croiser ma voix sérieuse
> Mes yeux soutiennent un réseau de regards purs (*OC* I 1035)

Similarly, in 'Les raisons de rêver' (*LO* II), Eluard writes of being 'fraternellement seul' (*OC* I 1078).

Frénaud approaches a notion of *fraternité* from a different angle. Indeed, he sometimes views *fraternité* with a certain amount of cynicism. In 'L'eau noire', for example, he describes the relationship between people as a kind of ritualized cannibalism, connoted by the Feast of the Eucharist (*RM* 30). It is nonetheless possible to see in his work the same idea of 'fraternal solitude': Frénaud believes that each individual is thwarted in his or her search for an ideal, primordial completeness of being and that this shared frustration is the basis of a common bond between self and others.

Frénaud's sense of *fraternité* develops paradoxically from his conviction that one person cannot possibly unite with another. In a conversation with Marcel Cabon in 1956, he highlights and explains his feeling of separation from others:

> il y a surtout ce mur qui empêche que les hommes soient un seul être fraternel, qui m'empêche d'être tous ceux-là que j'ai été depuis que je suis au monde, qui m'empêche d'être cette partie de moi qui est toi ou qui est cet autre et que j'ai perdue en venant au monde.[33]

Any possibility of a complete union with others is denied, in other words, by the very act of coming into existence, which Frénaud takes as a severance from unity. This original, lost unity is described in the final reckoning of 'Epitaphe':

> Quand je remettrai mon ardoise au néant
> un de ces prochains jours,
> il ne me ricanera pas à la gueule.

> Mes chiffres ne sont pas faux,
> ils font un zéro pur. (*RM* 13)

Such unity inheres only before birth and after death. In life, Frénaud is condemned to an uncomfortable awareness of a fragmentation of the self. He is unable to grasp, at once, a composite image of himself, for his being has been fragmented by the passage of time:

> Je ne me reconnais pas dans cet enfant.
> J'ai oublié ces éclats dans la brume.
> Que le vent t'emporte, bouffée doucereuse,
> et que je sois seul comme je suis seul.
>
> Pourtant je voudrais l'étreindre quand je le fuis,
> recomposer l'homme entier jusqu'à mon âge,
> celui qui acceptait sa place et leurs jeux. (*RM* 33)

Frénaud's concern with the loss of that part of himself which remains in the past is also evident in 'Pays perdu', where, despite a succession of images gleaned from his 'pays d'enfance' (*RM* 48), the poet concludes, defeated, that 'ici, il n'y a plus d'autrefois' (*RM* 49).

Even within the present, Frénaud's wish to seize the self in its entirety is confounded by his awareness of the complexity of the individual. Witness his concern with the unconscious, which he dubs his 'intime grondeuse' (*RM* 34). His poems abound in the rats and worms that he uses as figures of the unconscious.

Frénaud's sense of isolation from others issues, then, from his estrangement from himself and his inability to find any internal unity in his being. This is made clear in 'Séparé', where, rejecting the company of others, he writes: 'Je vais vous ouvrir mon secret, hommes assis: / Je me suis inacceptable' (*RM* 32). Similarly, in 'Les Rois Mages', we are told that the three kings follow their journey 'mêlés à tous et séparés' (*RM* 129); the discord between them only mirrors the discord within each of them:

> Et nous poursuivons en murmurant contre nous,
> tous les trois brouillés autant qu'un seul
> peut l'être avec lui-même. (*RM* 129)

Yet it is precisely this sense of solitude and disconnection which forms the strongest bond between Frénaud and his fellow existants. G.-E. Clancier qualifies Frénaud as

'le poète de la solitude fraternelle'.[34] For Frénaud is aware that he shares his alienation with others, and that this facet of human existence forms a basis of community. Hence his unusual expression of community in the poem entitled 'Fraternité':

> Pitié pour vous et pour moi
> puisqu'il n'est pas permis, frères,
> d'être un seul être fraternel,
> avant le sein froid de la nuit,
> dans l'unité de notre mère. (*RM* 33)

This same attitude of fraternal solitude is evident in 'Villes en pierre', where Frénaud again expresses the unity that arises from a common separation:

> Mes frères déambulant, sans lieu ni feu ni rivage,
> couleur sans espoir d'en changer,
> hommes de nuit au rabâchage acrimonieux,
> solitaires dans la ville, moi aussi solitaire. (*RM* 65)

2. *FRATERNITE* AND INDIVIDUALITY

In all of the examples above, it should be noted that the poets in no way envisage solidarity with others as a threat to individuality. Obviously Frénaud's sense of his own individuality remains painfully intact within a community. And while his rather atypical description of *fraternité* is highly idiosyncratic, there is, nonetheless, some parallel between his expressions of fraternal solitude and the belief held by other poets of the time that the individual is never eclipsed within the community to which he or she is bound.

In *Vivre en poésie*, Guillevic remembers the horror he had experienced during the phoney war when he was just another soldier in the army, amassed with others in a common identity. This, he says, filled him with a sense of his distance from others; it bears witness to his need to maintain his individuality. During the Resistance, however, he recognized no incompatibility between individuality and solidarity. His Resistance experience taught him that 'être différent, mais solidaire, ce n'est pas aberrant' (p. 73).

Similar to this is Char's description of himself as 'solitaire et multiple' in *Feuillets d'Hypnos* (*FM* 105). In other words, Char's sense of his internal solitude survives

this period of Resistance activity when he depended on and was depended on by fellow partisans and compatriots alike. There is ample evidence in *Feuillets d'Hypnos* of his feeling of solidarity with others; in every instance we can see that his singular existence, and the singular existence of others, depends upon this bond of *fraternité*. Like all partisans, of course, he depended for his very life upon the support of his community. He writes of being saved from the Gestapo by the people of a village where he was in hiding: 'Je tenais à ces êtres par mille fils confiants dont pas un ne devait se rompre. (...) J'ai aimé farouchement mes semblables cette journée-là' (pp. 119-120). The many compassionate portraits he sketches of his fellow Resisters all stress their uniqueness: the qualities and the faults, the nervous tics, the frustrations, the marvellous flights of lyricism that make them stand out, as individuals, within their community.[35] He seems anxious, above all, that each member of his group should be enabled to maintain an awareness of their distinctiveness. He worries, for example, that a seventeen-year-old Resister, who has been unable, as yet, to develop a sense of his own difference, has been too easily absorbed into the collective identity of his group: 'Cet enfant trop uniment porté par l'exemple de ses camarades, dont la bonne volonté est trop impersonnellement identique à la leur, ne se penche jamais sur lui-même' (pp. 102-3). He even warns himself against becoming irritated at the unpredictable, heterogeneous nature of those around him. He has to remind himself that the contradictions within individuals, as well as the variety of types of people, are necessary, indeed stimulating: 'Ne pas tenir compte outre mesure de la duplicité qui se manifeste dans les êtres. En réalité, le filon est sectionné en de multiples endroits. Que ceci soit stimulant plus que sujet d'irritation' (p. 115).

This concern for the integrity of others forms the basis of Char's own social contract. He wishes to give to others the dignity and the respect of their person that he wishes for himself: 'Tiens vis-à vis des autres ce que tu t'es promis à toi seul. Là est ton contrat' (p. 129). This vital aspect of the poet's sense of *fraternité* is highlighted by Serge Velay in his study of Char:

> La communauté fraternelle ne remet (...) pas en cause l'intégrité de chacun de ceux qui la composent: la solidarité n'exclut pas la

> distance qui est la condition du respect et de l'estime dûs à autrui comme à soi-même.[36]

It is worth noting that this concept of *fraternité* as something which respects and enhances the individual echoes the Revolutionary idea of Sièyes, who argued that the fraternal function of the French *patrie* was to protect the individual freedom of each of its members. Sartre refers to this important aspect of the French Revolution in *Les Carnets de la drôle de guerre:* 'La Révolution française est une révolution analytique et critique, en ce sens qu'elle envisage une société comme un contrat entre des *individus*' (p. 38). Again, this evidences the continuation of Revolutionary ideals within *le pays réel.*

3. PERMANENCE THROUGH *'FRATERNITE'*

As well as being protected by the community, the individual finds in it some sort of justification. Char appeals to life to show him the part that he, as an individual, can play in a common destiny: 'désigne-moi ma part si tant est qu'elle existe, ma part justifiée dans le destin commun au centre duquel ma singularité fait tache mais retient l'amalgame' (*FM* 146). The sense of belonging to a community and feeling justified and completed by it, is an important counteraction to absurdity which, as we have seen, dictates an incompleteness and lack of justification which strips our lives of meaning. So, for example, the despairing quality of Char's question: 'Sommes-nous voués à n'être que des débuts de vérité?' (*FM* 135) is relieved and displaced by the answer he immediately gives: 'L'action qui a un sens pour les vivants n'a (...) d'achèvement que dans les consciences qui en héritent et la questionnent' (*FM* 135).

The idea of finding, within an extended community, that unity and duration of self which disintegrates in solitude, is also voiced by Eluard. One of the poems which best exemplifies Eluard's exaltation of *fraternité* is 'Eternité de ceux que je n'ai pas revus' (*ARA*). Here, Eluard celebrates writers and intellectuals killed during the Resistance. He voices a joyful belief that through their communion with others, each member of a large network of people achieves a kind of permanence, or eternity:

Leurs mains ont serré les miennes
Leur voix a formé ma voix
Dans un miroir fraternel
Et mes mains serrent les mains
D'hommes qui naîtront demain
Et qui leur ressemblent tant
Que je me crois éternel
(...)
Nous ne sommes plus nombreux
Nous sommes à l'infini (*OC* I 1287)

That each individual is the keystone not only of a community formed by their contemporaries, but of a collectivity in the movement of history, is part of the idealism in this poetry which helps to salve the horror of our transience.

For Emmanuel, we are collective, historical beings in the sense that we are part of a human race that extends from Adam onwards. We are at the centre of all history: 'l'Origine / et la Fin forniquent en nous bizarrement' (*Com* 56). In Emmanuel's poetry, blood is the symbol of man as a collective being. He addresses it as the

vermeille clarté de l'intime soleil
qui inscris en chaque vivant le cycle énorme
de l'humaine filiation depuis Adam (*Com* 33)

The penultimate poem of Emmanuel's *La Liberté guide nos pas* speaks of a victory whereby man - 'lui que l'on eût réduit en poudre en le touchant' (p. 153) - is restored to his position as the axis of time:

Au coeur du temps, pilier puissant de la balance
où l'histoire pèse leur dû aux nations,
où Futur et passé s'équilibrent sans cesse
comme à l'épaule un poids en deux parts divisé,
l'Arbre humain prend racine en la substance épaisse
pétrie des morts d'hier et de demain mêlés (p. 135)

Certain poems by Seghers - particularly the ones in which he toys with cosmology - expound the same idea, from an atheistic standpoint, that all of time and indeed all of the created universe is concentrated within each individual. In 'Des dieux', for example, Seghers writes of a single, universal force which acts within us. This defeats the notion of time and the threat of our impermanence:

Le temps n'existe pas. Le temps et le soleil
Sont indéfiniment liés à notre vie
Le système du ciel habite notre coeur

Notre tête est pareille aux mouvantes étoiles
Et nous sommes si grands que du centre à son bord
L'Univers vit en nous ses vivants et ses morts (*DP* 63)

Condensed into every individual, in other words, is the whole universe and the whole history of humanity: another important aspect of the historical totality of man. The defeat of time described in the examples above is the strongest measure of how our sense of absurdity can be overcome by a sense of community.

4. *FRATERNITE* AS RESISTANCE TO NAZISM

It seemed especially important to these poets to voice such ideas on the necessary reciprocity of self and others during the Resistance. There are three main ways in which the notion that the individual and the community are interdependent applied directly to the Resistance struggle. *Fraternité* was used as an incitement to combat and as an appeal to heroism (or a justification for self-sacrifice). In these ways, outlined below and then illustrated by the Châteaubriant poems, *fraternité* was intended to motivate and to justify the Resistance. Finally, I will argue that the very nature of the *fraternité* proposed in the poetry formed a corrective to the concept of man in relation to his community that was proposed by Nazism.

(a) An incitement to combat

To accept the necessary connection between ourselves and others is, as we saw in Char's work, not only to give but to will for others the same dignity and respect for their person that we wish for ourselves.

There are many references in these poets' work to the individual as a singular reflection of the rest of the community. Eluard writes that 'chacun est l'ombre de tous' (*OC* I 1228). Emmanuel qualifies the individual as 'l'Homme-Foule' (*LGP* 91) and describes himself as the 'capitaine du naufrage universel' (*LGP* 92), inseparable from the crowd 'comme à la mer le sel' (*LGP* 92). In *Autobiographies*, Emmanuel continued to express his belief that each person 'porte en soi le visage de son Dieu' (p. 230) or, more secularly, 'la figure universelle de l'homme' (p. 230). He concludes

from this that 'Qui cherche à me diminuer, à me défigurer de telle sorte que j'aie honte de ce que je suis, outrage en moi la nature humaine, ce visage qui nous est commun' (p. 230).

Seghers was to say after the war that one of the roles of poetry is to 'porter à la connaissance des autres les tourments, les misères du corps collectif'.[37] He describes his own Resistance poems, such as 'Octobre', as cries that issued instinctively from what he recognized then as a wound in the collective consciousness:

> Il est certain que, lorsque, dans cette fraternité d'hommes jetés dans les risques de la guerre, on en prend quelques-uns et qu'on les met devant un peloton d'exécution, ceux qui restent poussent un cri, naturel, venu de coeur et de la colère. On se sent alors faire intimement, viscéralement partie de tous. Aucun parti ne leur a demandé de crier ainsi, mais lorsqu'on blesse à mort la conscience collective dans un corps vivant, on se met tous à hurler.[38]

It was vital during the Resistance that any disfiguration of the individual was seen and felt as an attack on the community at large, and vice-versa. It was this outraged sense of *fraternité* which was to lead others into the Resistance. Hence the reminders, on various levels, of our connection with others who are suffering.

Take, for example, a poem by Louis Parrot on the deportations:

> Frères marqués comme des bêtes
> J'ai vu vos noms dans les journaux
> Les noms d'une seule famille
> Grains de blé jetés dans la boue
> (...)
> Quand vous vous êtes en allés
> Au devant de la vie sordide
> Les wagons fuyaient le ciel vide
> Le désert prenait pas sur l'homme.[39]

Georges Hugnet's poem, 'Parce que tu es bon', makes more explicit the need for combat, aroused at the time by the feeling of solidarity with others:

> Parce que tu es bon et juste parce que tu es mon frère
> que mon chagrin et mon vin sont les tiens (...)
> camarade mon frère tu ne dois pas oublier tu dois imposer
> ta loi et répondre au malheur. [40]

By spreading the news of the suffering inflicted on individuals and whole communities, Resistance poets tapped the feeling of outraged humanity in themselves and in each of their readers, and channelled it into combat. This notion of combative *fraternité* is exemplified in the Châteaubriant poems, examined further on.

(b) An appeal to heroism

The second connection between the Resistance and the interrelation of self and others comes from the notion that an individual's life and actions find completion and justification in the lives of others.

Eluard, who writes in *Le Lit la table* that 'la beauté de l'homme est plus grande que l'homme' (*OC* I 1216), expresses the idea in 'Nos uniremos' (*ARA*) that the individual's greatness comes from expanding outwards, generously, towards the community:

> Nous sommes seuls nos frères nos enfants sont seuls
> Nous voulons partager multiplier le jour
> Car la grandeur de l'homme c'est huit fois sa tête (*OC* I 1283)

It was precisely this sort of belief that inspired the self-effacing heroism of individual Resisters.

Char, for example, recognizes that the potential for action and individual heroism is a function of feeling part of a community which makes sense of the hero's actions. In *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, he writes of banishing his own fear and cowardice by reminding himself of his fraternal connection with others: 'Si je consens à cette appréhension qui commande à la vie sa lâcheté, je mets aussitôt au monde une foule d'amitiés formelles qui volent à mon secours' (*FM* 103). He marvels at his fellow partisans' ability to sacrifice themselves for the cause of freedom: 'J'aime ces êtres tellement épris de ce que leur coeur imagine la liberté qu'ils s'immolent pour éviter au peu de liberté de mourir' (*FM* 127). He calls this ability the 'merveilleux mérite du peuple' (*FM* 127), emphasising that the Resisters' heroism, along with the freedom for which they fought, depended on the partisan's awareness of belonging to and helping to form a community.

Again, the Châteaubriant poems will illustrate this point, for they each express the idea that the dead hostages will be resurrected in the community that survives them.

(c) *Fraternité* and the Châteaubriant poems

The poems written in response to the Châteaubriant executions can be found in the appendix to this thesis. They all exemplify the idea that injury caused to any member of a community is apprehended as an injury to the community at large and to each of its members. Most of the poems are inflammatory, expressing the deaths of the hostages in such a way as to provoke the reader's anger; they are all highly charged with the theme of combat.

Take, for example, Seghers's 'Octobre'. In this poem, the emphasis that is given to the physical reality of the hostages' deaths is a measure both of Seghers's own anger, and of the sense of outrage that he wishes to provoke in his reader. Witness the emotive quality of the phrase 'Arrachés aux bras de leurs enfants', and the vivid descriptions of the attitudes of the hostages' bodies in death. The hostages, we are told, 's'affaissèrent sur les genoux'. In the final stanza we see 'cent corps se plier'. The poem abounds in images of blood which reiterate this theme of violent death. The first stanza contains a description of autumn - a time of year which is generally associated with natural death. The descriptions of dead leaves and the autumn grape harvest could, then, be interpreted as a conventional and idealised expression of the hostages' deaths. However, Seghers strips these images bare of sentimentality by stressing that in this particular October, 'la vendange est faite dans le sang'. Consequently, the bright red vines and the 'feuilles mortes' are related to the hostages' deaths not so much by a consoling notion of natural death as by this dominant connotation of blood, and therefore of violent death. From then on, images of blood dominate the poem to the point of obsession. Lines 5-6 describe the wind spreading splashes of blood over a snow-covered landscape: 'Dans la neige du monde, dans l'hiver blanc, il porte / Des taches rouges où la colère s'élargit'. Further on, this blood is said to stain the water of the Loire, which flows south of Châteaubriant; we have then an image of 'notre Loire sanglante' spreading the hostages' blood throughout France. This obsessive repetition of the notion of blood, combined with the visual descriptions of the bodies, brings the reader back constantly to the irrevocable fact that

these hostages have been violently murdered.

Emmanuel's description of the executions in 'Otages' is inseparable from the notion of some future combat. The poem opens with a statement of defiance, where Emmanuel claims that the hostages' blood will forever stain the soil of France:

> Ce sang ne séchera jamais sur notre terre
> et ces morts abattus resteront exposés.

The implication is that because 'notre terre' is French soil, and because this blood is the blood of executed hostages, it will never be allowed to dry. That the continued presence of the dead is consciously willed is demonstrated in the last two lines of this first stanza:

> Nous grincerons des dents à force de nous taire
> nous ne pleurerons pas sur ces croix renversées.

The deaths of the hostages were no ordinary deaths, for they are 'morts abattus' whose crosses have been overturned. For Emmanuel, a devout and committed Catholic, each of these deaths represents a negation of what Christ stood for. The image of the overturned crosses also suggests that in the case of the hostages, the conventional ceremony of death has been desecrated: their bodies remain exposed, like the dead slaughtered on a battlefield, with no funerals to attend or gravesides to weep by. For all these reasons, the response of their mourners, which Emmanuel dictates, is charged with hatred as well as sorrow: 'Nous grincerons des dents'; 'nous ne pleurerons pas'.

Emmanuel suggests an alternative way of mourning the hostages. At first, there seems nothing more ordinary or conventional than his vow that the dead will be remembered:

> Mais nous nous souviendrons de ces morts sans mémoire
> nous compterons nos morts comme on les a comptés.

However, the negative 'mais' which opens this stanza charges the statements that follow with the same tone of defiance seen in the first. As before, the meaning of this defiance is in future action, which in this case takes the form of an apparently innocuous act of remembering. The defiant nature of the act of remembering lies in the fact that the hostages are 'sans mémoire' - without an official memorial. The very fact

that the hostages' deaths were officially misrepresented, if not ignored, makes it necessary for the reader to remember them in a certain way, and there is some irony in the fact that although the hostages are officially 'sans mémoire', their memory is evoked in Emmanuel's poem which is itself a 'mémoire'. So while 'nous nous souviendrons de ces morts' recalls the familiar 'we will remember them' which is voiced at memorial services, it becomes clear that there is nothing so conventional in the act of remembering announced by Emmanuel. He goes on to say that 'nous compterons nos morts comme on les a comptés'. Again, this notion of counting the dead is typical of a wartime 'counting our losses'. However, the notion loses its familiarity when aligned with 'comme on les a comptés', which brings into play connotations of the execution ritual. The message that can be inferred from these lines is that the way in which the reader will remember these hostages, and count them (or take them into account) will be as consequential and perhaps even as violent an act as their original executions.

Bérimont's poem to the Châteaubriant dead conveys a similar message of militancy.[41] The final stanza of the poem contains a brutal image of the hostages' bellies having been split open. This violent image is connected overtly with combat:

> Les couchés dresseront leurs poings d'épis luisants
> De leur ventres fendus jailliront des armées
> Tout retourne à l'été, tout rentre dans le rang
> Le boulanger pétrit des neiges explosées.

The first line of this stanza contains what is by now the familiar notion that the dead will fertilize the soil of France : ears of corn, we are told, will grow from the hostages' corpses. The notion of the earth being regenerated by the dead, far from being consoling, is a direct invitation to combat. The ears of corn are described as clenched fists; following this connotation of militancy, the word 'épis' brings to mind its near homonym, 'epées'. It is almost as if the fields of corn were filled with gleaming swords. Bérimont then predicts that armies will spring from the hostages' wounds. The connection between corn and militancy is maintained in the final line, where we are reminded that the peculiar, explosive flour is made from ears of corn, already described as weapons. In the penultimate line, Bérimont describes the return of

summer; just as he subverts the determinism of the idea that the dead will nourish new life, so he strips all fatalism from the phrase 'tout rentre dans le rang'. Taken in conjunction with the previous images of combat, this phrase takes on the military sense of 'rentrer dans les rangs'. In other words, things will return to normal and settle down, not by people toeing the line of the Occupation, but by forming armies to resist the occupying forces. The hostages' deaths, and Bérimont's descriptons of them, inject into the reader's mind this need for combat.

Masson's evocation of the hostage's deaths is similarly charged with the notion of combat. The way in which he describes the eyes of the hostages is particularly significant:

> Ils ne s'en sont pas allés dormir dans la luzerne deux à deux
> comme des ouvriers fatigués
> Seigneur, et leurs yeux par vos étés ne deviendront pas ces
> colchiques des yeux morts ordinaires
> fermés: les yeux des fusillés sont poudre sèche et ferment.

This description makes explicit the militant nature of Masson's homage to the dead. He describes the hostages' eyes as 'poudre sèche et ferment'. There is a connotation of gunpowder in 'poudre sèche' which corresponds to the fact that the Châteaubriant dead are 'fusillés'. The word 'ferment' then implies that the eyes of the dead hostages will somehow activate growth and change and the connotation of gunpowder suggests that this change will be brought about by violent means. In other words, the eyes of the hostages are described, unusually, as having militant power. This derives from the violent nature of their deaths, emphasized initially by the contrast Masson draws between the closed eyes of people who have died peacefully and the open eyes of the dead hostages. Lines 13-16 clarify the significance of the fact that the hostages died with their eyes open. In these lines, their open eyes are associated with an awareness of tyranny, for we are told that the tyrant 'ne fera pas tomber ces paupières que l'horreur retient écarquillées'. With this awareness comes an unwillingness to be intimidated by the tyrant's actions. Just as 'baisser les yeux' can be interpreted as an act of submission, so there is a hint of defiance in the act of facing horror consciously and open-eyed. So as well as signalling the unnatural manner in which the hostages died, this image of open eyes connotes an unwillingness to submit to tyranny. In this

sense, the open eyes of the dead, as 'poudre sèche et ferment', can engender resistance to tyranny in those who have witnessed the executions. 'Les yeux victimes' are, therefore, both the eyes of the hostages, and those of the eye-witnesses - poet and now reader - who, by dint of the executions, can recognize themselves as victims of tyranny.

The Châteaubriant poems are also underpinned by the idea that an individual's life is extended and justified through *fraternité*. Common to all of the poems is the theme that the hostages will somehow be resurrected within a community that their deaths will have helped to found.

Seghers, for example, juxtaposes references to the hostages' executions with repeated allusions to their rebirth. The final reference to blood in 'Octobre' treats it both as evidence of the hostages' death and as something that is instrumental in their resurrection:

> Alors ils renaîtront à la fin de ce calvaire
> Malgré l'Octobre vert qui vit cent corps se plier
> Aux côtés de la Jeanne au visage de fer
> Née de leur sang de fusillés.

Here, the hostages are said to rise at the side of Joan of Arc, whose own reincarnation is a function of their deaths. Earlier in the poem there is another allusion to the hostages' rebirth, in a fabulous image of them rising from the dead, clothed in fire:

> Ils ressusciteront vêtus de feu dans nos écoles
> Arrachés aux bras de leurs enfants ils entendront
> Avec la guerre, l'exil et la fausse parole
> D'autres enfants dire leurs noms

The fantastic, phoenix-like image of the hostages being reborn is brought down to earth by the idea that their resurrection will be effected by children learning about them in schools. In other words, the hostages will live on in the community which survives them: remembered as heroes in the minds of successive generations of schoolchildren.

Both Masson and Emmanuel also suggest that the hostages will be reborn. From the death of the hostages, Masson creates an image of fertility: 'l'odeur du sang innocent à jamais sommeille dans la chair des femmes d'ici'. Autumn is traditionally the time when fertility is celebrated; Masson gives a parallel celebration in this image of potential life, fertilized by the blood of the hostages and lying dormant in mothers'

wombs. It is interesting that in an article written about the hostages in 1944,[42] Masson uses the same idea of the Châteaubriant dead fertilizing the living and being reborn through them. Three years after the executions, he was to ask: 'qu'ont-ils fait, par leur mort, sinon prendre habitation parmi nous?'. He goes on to say: 'je salue leur résurrection en chacun des hommes que je rencontre dans ce trajet de Montmartre au Palais-Royal. Chacun de ces hommes, habité par eux - disons le mot: fécondé - est devenu eux.' The article ends with a description of the hostages 'définitivement reconstitués, splendides, vivants, dans le plus beau des ciels bleus, dans chaque homme libre'.

In 'Le temps du beau plaisir...', Bérimont voices the same idea, that the hostages will live on within their community. A cycle of life and death is presented in the poem through references to the changing seasons. The poem opens with a description of late summer merging into autumn: 'Le temps de beau plaisir serpente par des plaines / Où les blés vont rugir avec leurs lions roux'. Summer is connoted by the image of ripening wheat, by the descriptions of the swaying wheatfields as lion's manes, and by the portrayal of a time spent in the pursuit of innocent pastimes - like sailing lazily down a winding river. Late summer is the time of harvesting corn and vines, and so:

> Les enfants couleront de ces toisons oisives:
> Un peuple est à mûrir dans les caves de l'août
> Des lèvres, par milliers, sucent la terre ouverte.

This is indeed a strange harvest, with children being reaped from the cornfields and people, instead of wine, maturing and fermenting in the cellars. In the context, Bérimont's descriptions of summertime are associated with blood: the redness of the lion's manes in line 2 correlates with 'l'océan de sang' of the second stanza. The implication is that the blood of the hostages will feed the people of France, with the children being suckled by the blood of the dead. In the second stanza, Bérimont makes more explicit the connection between the hostages' blood and the corn which will nourish the people of France: 'C'est le cargo du blé, c'est l'océan du sang.' As in the previous stanza, this image of corn growing from the blood of the dead involves a projection towards the future, in that a cargo of wheat is clearly destined to feed people in times to come. This idea of the dead feeding the living is stated clearly in line 8:

'Les morts sont à nourrir la bouche des vivants'; the rhyme of 'sang' and 'vivants' then reinforces the notion that the living will feed off the dead.

In all of these poems, we have the idea of the Châteaubriant dead creating a new humanity, and being continued or resurrected through it. This theme of rebirth is developed in Chapter IV, with reference to these same poems and to a number of poems written in memory of Gabriel Péri.

(d) A corrective to Nazism

'Fraternité et bonheur (ou plutôt joie virile):
voilà le seul ciel où j'aspire. Ici-haut.' (Ponge; *Pr* 159)[43]

In Chapter II, examples were given of love and *fraternité* being presented in the poetry as a counteraction to Nazism. This counteraction can be explained in terms of two conflicting conceptions of man in his relation to the community.

Nazism, too, conceived of a certain interdependence of self and others. It was also based on the idea that the individual requires the presence of others in order to justify his own existence. There, however, the similarities end.

In the Resistance ethic of *fraternité*, individuals connect with others in respect, wishing to preserve in their relations with others the dignity and the freedom that they recognize as crucial to their own individual existence. According to Rosenberg, on the other hand, any bond of respect, love and pity between people was a sure forerunner of moral decadence in a society or in a nation. He argued that such moral decadence could only be held in check by what he terms the Nordic sense of honour, on which the greatness of the German nation depended:

> As to the motive which has supplied the *raison d'être* of the soul, State and culture of the Nordic race, it is plain that before everything else came the conception of honour. (...) It is this that moulded and preserved the character of our race, our nations and States. At this very moment, however, when love and pity become predominant features, (...) the epoch of a racial and cultural decay begins.[44]

Rosenberg makes it clear that individual heroism, honour and brutality are all commensurable:

> All heroism centres around one supreme value. And this has always been the idea of intellectual and spiritual honour. (...)

> The ancient Nordic man, even though he was brutal - whether in war or death - created a pure atmosphere, emanating from his honour-conscious mind.[45]

In Nazi ideology, the individual's sense of his own distinction is all-important. It issues from the connection that he forges with those around him. The parallel with the fundamental need that underlies *fraternité* is obvious. But the means of achieving this distinction, through others, is radically different for the fascist man.

National Socialism, which posed as a philosophy of life, was itself in need of philosophers to support its policies. It chose Nietzsche as one of its principal ideologues. R.J. Hollingdale points out in his study of Nietzsche that the philosopher had in fact been strongly opposed to the chauvinism and anti-semitism that were becoming features of German nationalism during his lifetime.[46] National Socialism's use of his ideas would hardly therefore have been countenanced by Nietzsche himself, and its lifting of selected passages from his work gave rise to a misleadingly incomplete interpretation of his philosophy. That said, however, it is easy to see how Nietzsche's theory of the individual will to power led him into being adopted by National Socialism as the philosopher whose ideas sanctioned the brutal aggressiveness that characterised the Nazi period.

This theory of the will to power is summarised at the beginning of *The Anti-Christ:*

> What is good? - All that enhances the feeling of power,the Will to Power, and power itself in man. What is bad? - All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? - The feeling that power is increasing, that a resistance has been overcome.[47]

The resistance which has been overcome is the resistance of other people to our individuality, which can only be asserted by exerting power over others. In order to achieve distinction, the individual must dominate others. This is enounced in Nietzsche's *The Dawn of Day:*

> *STRIVING FOR DISTINCTION* - When we strive after distinction we must ceaselessly keep our eyes fixed on our neighbour and endeavour to ascertain what his feelings are; but the sympathy and knowledge which are necessary to satisfy this desire are far from being inspired by harmlessness, compassion, or kindness. On the contrary, we wish to perceive or find out in what way our neighbour suffers from us, either internally or

> externally, how he loses control over himself, and yields to the impression which our hand or even our mere appearance makes on him. (...) The desire for distinction is the desire to subject one's neighbour.[48]

So the necessary connection between the individual and others is not the sympathy and mutual respect willed by Resistance poets, but a brutal assertion of power which feeds on the suffering of others,

Such ideas found their place in the Nazi conception of man. So too did Nietzsche's idea of the 'Übermensch' - the superman who stood out above the common crowd. In *The Will to Power*, he writes:

> I teach that there are higher and lower men, and that a single individual may under certain circumstances justify whole milleniums of existence - that is to say, wealthier, more gifted, greater, and more complete, as compared with innumerable imperfect and fragmentary men.[49]

Again, this provided philosophical backing for the view of man promoted by National Socialism, which was essentially two-tiered. There was the virile, aggressive, 'honour-conscious' individual and there were others, massed together, whose whole purpose was to sublimate the privileged individual's will to power. The mass meetings, presided over by Hitler and Goebbels, are perfect illustrations of this two-tiered conception of man realised within a nation. Extended, the same conception justified the Aryan's domination of whole ethnic groups.

There are references in Resistance poetry to the enemy's brutal, death-dealing individualism. In 'Prophétie sur les nations', Emmanuel shows a tyrant meditating on how to assert and delegate what could well be termed his will to power:

> dans une salle aux murs blindés de regards morts
> le tyran, mécanique frêle et colossale,
> médite au milieu d'un réseau de fils vivants,
> et, sensible aux frissons les plus doux de la toile,
> délègue son pouvoir de saisir, de tuer,
> de torturer jusqu'aux fibres d'éternité
> à des engins de destruction nés de la femme
> hommes peut-être par leur ressemblance à dieu (*Com* 34)

That this tyrant plots the torture and death of others in complete isolation is significant. The heroic individual, according to the Nazi ideal, only connects with others to assert his authority.

Further evocations of Nazism's tyrannical cult of the individual can be found in the poetry of Marcenac and Eluard. In their wartime poetry, the enemy is invariably characterised as a solitary being whose existence thrives on an endemic disregard for others.

Marcenac's most violent Resistance poems, collected in *Le Ciel des fusillés*, contain descriptions of his oppressors which stress their inhumanity, or the traits in them that oppose, as Marcenac would have it, the advent of man. What Marcenac stresses most about his enemies is their self-imposed isolation from others. He uses the notion of 'le regard' in much the same way as Eluard, as the faculty that forges a fraternal connection between people. He writes of the Collaborators having severed this contact with other people: 'Un seul ciel Un seul coeur leur servait de miroir / Entre eux ils le nommaient miroir de nul visage' (p. 49); their gaze is shipwrecked:

> Ils sont plus seuls chaque saison
> Ils sont plus seuls que de raison
> Le ciel Le jour les abandonnent
> Ils vivent dans un horizon
> Où le regard a fait naufrage (p. 46)

The old Collaborator, caricatured in 'Un jour viendra', confesses to having lived and still wanting to live in isolation from others, 'Les yeux clos La tête basse' (p. 42); in 'Mort à nos ennemies', Marcenac writes:

> Ils ont des yeux pour ne pas voir
> Une tête pour oublier
> Tout ce qui fait notre misère (p. 26)

In 'Voici leur tour d'être traqués', it is suggested that their disregard for others is what allows them their violence:

> Ils riaient des sculpteurs
> Ecrasaient en chantant la figure des hommes
> Et voulaient rester noirs même devant la mort (p. 49)

Eluard, too, places emphasis on the threateningly solitary nature of his enemies. Knowing that his being is founded on a criss-cross of interpersonal relations, Eluard feels his own existence undermined by the self-sufficiency and the indifference of others. In 'Beaux reflets' (*LO* II) he writes: 'Ils ne voient rien leur coeur est vide / Ils cernent de néant ma vie' (*OC* I 1070). In Eluard's descriptions of isolated beings,

which are clear, if sometimes indirect, portraits of the occupying forces, their solitude is always associated with death. This implies, on the one hand, that in willing their dissociation from others, they give in to a certain death-wish. This is certainly suggested in 'L'abandonné' (*LO* II):

> Homme injuste au front noir homme aux petits lois
> Découvert dénoncé haï par tes amours
> Tu te lasses tu doutes des serments parfaits
> Et pour te consoler tu consens à la mort. (*OC* I 1070)

It implies simultaneously that the enemy's indifference leads inevitably to the death of others. The link between death and the fact that the enemies are isolated beings - 'toujours les mêmes amants d'eux-mêmes' (*OC* I 1186) - is made conclusively in 'L'aube dissout les monstres' (*Le Lit la table*):

> Ils vivaient pour penser ils pensaient pour se taire
> Ils vivaient pour mourir ils étaient inutiles
> Ils recouvraient leur innocence dans la mort
>
> Ils avaient mis en ordre
> Sous le nom de richesse
> Leur misère leur bien-aimée
>
> Ils mâchonnaient des fleurs et des sourires
> Ils ne trouvaient de coeur qu'au bout de leur fusil (*OC* I 1216)

In the same poem, Eluard writes of 'ces ennemis indifférents'; their love of themselves (their need for distinction) coupled with their indifference to others, is what leads them on their crusade of destruction.

After the war, Char was to explain the violence and inhumanity that characterised Nazism as the result of 'le mépris d'autrui: une espèce d'indifférence colossale à l'égard des autres et de leur âme vivante'.[50]

The many references to *fraternité* that inform the bulk of Resistance poetry had an obvious role to play in the counteraction of such lethal indifference. As Macquarrie says in his study of existentialism: ' if the basically communal structure of existence is admitted, then it is clear that there can be no genuine humanity or authentic selfhood that is purely ego-regarding or that is anti-social in the way that fascism is.'[51]

In 'L'aube dissout les monstres', Eluard directly opposes the isolated, death-oriented individualism of the occupying forces with appeals to love and a sense of community:

Nous oublierons ces ennemis indifférents
Une foule bientôt
Répétera la claire flamme à voix très douce
La flamme pour nous deux pour nous seuls patience
Pour nous deux en tout lieu le baiser des vivants (*OC* I 1216)

For further examples of the Nazi cult of brutality and death being counteracted in Resistance poetry by appeals to *fraternité* and love, I would refer the reader back to Chapter II.

There is a second important way in which the poets' voicing of the individual's connection with the community formed a corrective to the Nazi concept of man. It was argued above that in practice, Nazism promoted a two-tiered idea of man. On the one hand, there was the type of death-dealing individualism that has just been noted; on the other there was the uniform ideal of the totalitarian man, moulded entirely in the image of the State. It is this collective, totalitarian man, that was being formed in the Hitler youth camps, that lay behind the team-spirit side of Nazism, that raised its arm stiffly in salute at mass meetings. Perhaps paradoxically, Nazism took both individualism and collectivism to an extreme.

Against the notion of a collective, totalitarian man, Resistance poets stress that *fraternité* allows for and indeed encourages diversity amongst people, as well as the complexity of each individual.

Char, as we have seen, celebrates the diversity of the partisans within his Resistance group. He also celebrates the contradictions and the imperfections within each individual. In *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, he writes: 'Un homme sans défauts est une montagne sans crevasses. Il ne m'intéresse pas' (*FM* 94).

Frénaud feels a fraternal bond with other people precisely because, like him, they are fragmentary, contradictory beings. Influenced by Freud and by Dostoyevsky, Frénaud is ever aware of a plurality in the individual personality, which he envisages as a teeming mass of contradictions. In *Notre inhabileté fatale*, he was to write: 'Je est légion, il est champ de bataille, automystification, lieu de tromperie' (p. 36). This complexity effectively puts paid to both essentialism and totalitarianism. The individual cannot be contained within any such reductive accounts of man:

> Le chaos, la violence qui vient du profond, (...) ne se laissera jamais réduire à un cosmos défendable, et l'effort de l'homme pour se structurer en une conscience, comme pour se représenter le monde par un système de pensée, sera toujours à recommencer. (p. 35)

The totality of man (as against totalitarian man) lies in a *fraternité* which protects rather than precludes the uniqueness of the individuals who comprise it.

We can see here more clearly how the poets' anti-essentialist descriptions of man counteract the uniformity and collectivism that inhere in totalitarianism. In his introduction to *La Liberté guide nos pas*, Emmanuel objects to any synthetic account of man 'qui prétende à la figure humaine sans en avoir le relief' (p. 73). Against this, he argues that the function of poets is to give an account of human existence wherein 'rien de l'homme ne soit exclu' in order that 'celui-ci, au moins autant que dans sa réalité *hic et nunc*, soit honoré dans ses possibles' (p. 73).

In conclusion to this section on *fraternité*, it is important to stress that the reciprocity of self and others is *embodied* as well as described in Resistance poetry. The poets' resistance was not simply a matter of referring to *fraternité* over and over again in their work. Such references were, of course, essential to the Resistance. They echoed through a variety of Resistance writings. Proper to the poetry, however, is the fact that ideas about the individual connecting with and depending on the community, protecting his or her freedom by promoting the freedom of others - ideas on which the concept of *fraternité* was based - are written into the language of the poems. There will be an analysis of this vital fraternal function of poetic language in Chapter IV.

V JUSTICE. A PERPETUAL STRUGGLE WITHIN MAN

> (...) or il se trouve que la poésie (...) peut reprendre la tradition royale du véritable humanisme: créer des oeuvres d'une actualité éternelle, qui révèlent à l'homme la nature de ses monstres, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur, et l'appellent à la lutte et à la victoire sur eux. (Emmanuel)[52]

1. RESISTING INJUSTICE

The French *patrie*, as voiced by Resistance poets, was the guarantor of the values of individual freedom, *fraternité* and also of justice. The fight against the injustices

that prevailed in wartime France was one of the most obvious and crucial features of the Resistance. Any recreation of *le pays réel* could only be effected through the recreation and reinstatement of the principle of justice on which it depended.

As with freedom and *fraternité*, the fight for justice was not only carried out in the name of France: it corresponded to a fundamental need in man.

One of the things that undermines the meaningfulness of existence is the lack of any ethical system with which to distinguish what is right and just from what is wrong and unjust. With the spread of atheism and the secularisation of the principle of justice came the idea that good and bad are not absolutes decreed by God but conventions constructed by individuals, societies or nations. The arbitrary nature of justice was evident during the Occupation, when the notion of justice that had existed before in France was completely overturned by Nazism. Just two amongst innumerable examples of the metamorphosis of old injustice into new justice were the executions of Gabriel Péri and the Châteaubriant hostages through force of what would now perhaps be termed a law of common purpose. The effects of such distortions of what had been held as justice were devastating, on many levels.

In *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, Char highlights the injury caused by the distortion of justice and truth in Occupied France: 'La perte de la vérité, l'oppression de cette ignominie dirigée qui s'intitule *bien* (...) a ouvert une plaie au flanc de l'homme' (*FM* 132). Injustice is, according to Eluard, 'le seul désordre' (*OC* I 1231). In *L'Homme Révolté*, Camus writes:

> Si les hommes ne peuvent pas se référer à une valeur commune, reconnue par tous en chacun, alors l'homme est incompréhensible à l'homme. Le rebelle exige que cette valeur soit clairement reconnue en lui-même parce qu'il soupçonne ou sait que, sans ce principe, le désordre et le crime régnerait sur le monde. (pp. 39-40)

The debilitating sense of disorder and disorientation provoked by the injustices committed daily during the Occupation clearly outlined how great is our need for justice.

After the war, Char was to remark to Pierre Guerre: 'surtout si dieu n'existe pas, c'est alors qu'il ne faut pas le perdre de vue.'[53] In the absence of any suitable system

of justice from above, decreed and maintained by God or the state, justice had to be created within the individual. In a sonnet written in captivity which denounces social injustice, Cassou appeals to a god of justice who is not in heaven but here on earth in the heart of man:

> O Dieu de justice qui régnez, non aux cieux,
> mais dans le coeur le l'homme, au coeur de sa colère
> ne vous répandrez-vous donc jamais sur la terre? (*Son* 68)

Justice lies, according to Cassou, in the heart of our anger: in our refusal of what we recognize as injustice.

In his 'Manifeste de l'école d'Oradour', Marcenac expresses the same idea, that the desire for good resulted from a recognition of evil: 'Nous avons connu le mal sur la Terre. Et un goût nous en est venu du bien et du bonheur' (*CF* 16). Marcenac takes the destruction of the village of Oradour as a striking example of inhumanity and injustice. One of the lessons learned in the 'Ecole d'Oradour' is how much we depend on justice:

> Il n'est rien de pareil aux aubes d'Oradour. Chacune d'elles sculpte et affine le visage humain. Là où vous n'aviez qu'une ébauche, la lumière de ce ciel éclaire un être définitif qui sait ce qu'il doit à la justice (...) (*CF* 16)

Another is that this 'être définitif', in order to recreate a viable justice within the world, must constantly battle against such instances of injustice as the destruction of Oradour; he or she must know that 'il n'a été d'abord mis au monde que pour défier à son tour celui qui peut porter, ailleurs ou dans d'autres temps, d'autres noms, mais que dans ce pays et aujourd'hui nous appelons le Géant d'Oradour' (*CF* 16).

In an interview with Jean Rousselot, published in 1965, Cassou states that justice is amongst the principles that command our action: 'je pense qu'il est des instances - vous avez nommé l'une d'elles: la liberté, et j'ajouterai la justice et la vérité, - qui commandent notre action'.[54] He claims that these principles are not absolutes. They are 'instances' which lead us to choose certain actions and certain attitudes as opposed to others - 'en l'occurrence contre ce qui est oppression, contre ce qui est iniquité et contre ce qui est mensonge'.[55] Again we have the idea that justice is created episodically in reaction to injustice.

In their studies of the work of Char, both Mounin and Guerre emphasise the fact that Char's ethics were invented as part of his irrepressible response to what was going on around him. Mounin writes that 'la bonté n'est pas pour lui la leçon toute faite d'une morale toute faite, mais la réponse irrépressible de son être à la condition humaine';[56] Guerre argues similarly that Char's morality, being voluntary, was of a different nature from that of ideologues or religions:

> L'éthique de Char n'a pas la même nature que celle des idéologues ou des religions. Elle est sans obligation, sanction ni récompense. Il s'agit d'une réaction volontaire, au coeur de l'insécurité où l'homme se trouve (...) Elle est une insurrection continuelle, la manière du poète d'intervenir dans le monde, de participer.[57]

In *Partage formel*, Char outlines the poet's necessary response to the 'evil' that was in evidence at the time:

> Certaines époques de la condition de l'homme subissent l'assaut glacé d'un mal qui prend appui sur les points les plus déshonorés de la nature humaine. Au centre de cet ouragan, le poète complétera par le refus de soi le sens de son message, puis se joindra au parti de ceux qui, ayant ôté à la souffrance son masque de légitimité, assurent le retour éternel de l'entêté portefaix, passeur de justice. (*FM* 79)

That justice was a combat against injustice, and truth a combat against falsehood, is also emphasised in *Feuillets d'Hypnos:* 'aussitôt que la vérité trouve un ennemi à sa taille, elle dépose l'armure de l'ubiquité et se bat avec les ressources même de sa condition' (*FM* 139). In the field of ethics as elsewhere, Char maintains his favoured dialectical perspective. Justice, truth and goodness are not absolutes that he can call upon in his defence or in the defence of man, but inventions, created through an instinctive resistance to injustice. Before the war, in *Moulin premier* (1936), he referred to goodness as his own creation, invented in response to oppression: 'Sous la loi d'oppression, je ne désavoue pas *ma bonté inventée*' (*OC* 48).

The examples above underline the personal nature of the poets' undertaking to recreate justice. The idea that the battle for justice must be fought by each individual emphasises two things. It is part of the overall argument, multi-faceted in Resistance poetry, that it is up to each of us to create our own meaningfulness and that this

creation is, in every instance, a function of some sort of resistance. Less obviously, perhaps, it also highlights the belief held by some poets that the real battlefield on which the struggle between justice and injustice takes place lies within each of us. It was the belief of certain poets that the war against Nazism externalized a combat between impulses or tendencies that are essentially internal. This second point, developed in the following pages, underlines the constancy of the need for a certain type of resistance, and provides further evidence of what I believe is the lasting relevance of Resistance poetry.

2. CONFLICTING TROPISMS

In *Autobiographies*, Emmanuel contends that the war against National Socialism had exteriorized and simplified a battle between good and evil which is conducted at all times within each individual. He claims that from the very outset of the war, he had understood that the real battle was less simplistic and more far-reaching: 'Au spectacle de ce conflit monstrueux, l'idée me hantait d'une guerre civile au sein de l'homme' (p. 263). In *En miroir*, Jouve says that he was fascinated during the war by the conflict of what he, too, saw as eternal, metaphysical forces at work within man. He writes that 'on ne pouvait concevoir une guerre métaphysiquement mieux fondée' (p. 93). Similarly, in an interview in 1981, Seghers was to refer back to the war as 'une vraie guerre de religion'.[58]

In the poetry written at the time, the internal nature of the conflict is sometimes expressed as a struggle between impulses or tropisms. These are given different labels, Catholic and atheist poets alike referring to a combat of good and evil, or of Eros and Thanatos, to borrow, as they did, the terms of Freud. The poets' expression of this internal conflict is examined below.

In the work of three Catholic poets - Jouve, Emmanuel and Masson - descriptions of the war in terms of the biblical struggle between good and evil laid emphasis on what they considered to be the lasting, ever renewable nature of the conflict against Nazism.

It is perhaps only to be expected that three Christian poets should align Hitlerism with evil. In Emmanuel's poetry, the crisis of Nazism is often expressed as a

resurgence of the Fall, which severed man from God and liberated the forces of evil or chaos, normally held in check by his aspiration towards God:

> La Faute de nouveau béante au fond du temps,
> la bouche insoupçonnée qui entonne l'abîme,
> la dévorante plaie entre l'homme et son dieu
> libère le néant de sa prison humaine
> et tout fait rage au coeur de tout (...) (*Com* 33)

The triumph of evil seemed, at the time, to be assured: 'voici que le Mal s'est fait homme, les hommes / l'ont reconnu ...' (*Com* 56). In *Combats avec tes défenseurs*, the unrestrained spread of evil describes, in the typically allusive manner of a contraband publication, the spread of Hitlerism through Europe. In Emmanuel's wartime work, 'la Voix' represents both the voice of Satan and the voice of Nazism. In 'Je me suis reconnu', this voice boasts to Christ of its victory over God:

> Nous sommes le péché de nos pères, nos pères
> sont engendrés par nous, nos fils sont de vieux morts,
> (...)
> Ah maintenant nous sommes dieu! ah maintenant
> ô Mal, tu fais tomber nos entraves humaines! (*Com* 54)

Again, when Emmanuel writes in 'O Allemagne' that 'Ici la majesté du Mal forge ses armes' (*LGP* 106), it is difficult not to associate that Prince of Evil with Hitler.

Like Emmanuel, Jouve identifies Nazism with Satanic evil. In *En miroir* he writes: 'Le principe fasciste, placé à l'imitation du marxisme sur les valeurs et avec les buts de "l'homme planétaire" - idolâtre, démagogie, servitude - m'avait très bien fait comprendre son diabolisme.' In *Gloire*, Jouve writes of man being devoured both by war and by the Anti-Christ (*VP* 33), and in 'Terres promises', he refers to 'le Mal qui nous promit jusqu'à mille ans sa force' (*VP* 189). This identification is just as unequivocal in 'A la France', written in 1939:

> (...) Dieu souffre
> La face humaine est offensée
> La bête de la mer est la bête de fer
> Hitlérienne! et le chiffre 666 à son front
> Elle avance contre nos coeurs! (...)[59]

In 'Otages fusillés à Châteaubriant' (see below, Appendix) Masson compares the execution of the hostages to the crucifixion of Christ. He alludes directly to the crucifixion in line 5, with a reference to Pilate, and again in lines 16-20:

Par-dessus les épaules des bourreaux les yeux victimes
éternellement le fixent
sur les branches de la croix
quand octobre déchiré entre les faisceaux crie Christ Christ
Christ
dont les mains sont de sang pour toucher le sang
Celui qu'on vit aux matins de Châteaubriant se pencher en
multipliant son suaire

The images of the poem then cluster around this central comparison. The month of October is described in anthropomorphic terms as being physically wounded, like Christ nailed to the cross: 'Octobre au coeur ouvert'; 'octobre déchiré entre les faisceaux'. With the initial comparison in mind, the 'écuelle de sang français' (line 4) connotes the sacrament of communion which commemorates Christ's death, the 'poing d'étoiles' (line 5) striking against 'le front de la vieille Judée' brings to mind the Crown of Thorns used to humiliate Christ, and the 'astre rouge' of line 10 is associated with the bleeding heart of Christ crucified. The Châteaubriant hostages are thereby associated with good and innocence, represented by the figure of Christ, and their executioners are associated with evil: the reference to 'la Bête' in the final line bringing to mind the Anti-Christ prophesied in Revelations.

It is hardly surprising that Christian poets should align Nazism thus with evil and the Resistance with innocence. Less predictable is the fact that Emmanuel recognizes God as well as Satan in his oppressors. In 'Soir de l'homme', he makes the kind of association we might expect between Nazism and evil, when Nazism is linked with Damnation. (A rather surprising description of hell being green may be explained by the fact that the Nazi uniforms were grey-green.)

(...) Las d'une chaste liberté
il aspire à la mort entre deux cuisses dures:
qu'au bas du temps l'enfer entr'ouvre ses verdures
et tout s'infond en la nostalgie de ce vert ... (*Com* 17)

In the same poem we are also told that God recognizes Himself in the tyrant:

Qu'est maintenant leur dieu? (...)
sa Face que la Voix façonna du dedans,
une Voix ravageant le monde, et pourtant sienne
car il se reconnaît sans fin dans le tyran (*Com* 18-9)

In 'Hymne de la paix', he addresses a supplication to God and refers again to Him

being marked by the evil of the time:

> quand les armées levent vers Toi leurs yeux traqués
> tu sens l'enfer rayonner d'elles sur ta Face
> y révélant les traits d'un éternel damné (*LGP* 113)

and in 'Temps de la Paix' there is a reference to 'Dieu défiguré' (*LGP* 85).

Such references to God suffering and being transformed through the agency of man are of paramount importance in these poets' work. They are part of their revitalization of the Christian myth, which was of great importance at a time when the official policy of the Catholic church was not to condemn fascism openly in order to preserve the neutrality of the Vatican. Emmanuel stresses this importance in *Autobiographies:* 'En ce temps où l'Eglise se taisait, où la foi n'était plus que lettre morte, le mythe chrétien prenait un sens inconnu depuis des siècles de foi(...)' (p. 228).

The figure of Christ was given a renewed, contemporary significance during the war. At the same time as it gives a wider resonance to the executions at Châteaubriant, Masson's comparison of the hostages to Christ makes the figure of Christ human and contemporary. Christ's humanity is emphasised in the poem by Masson's unorthodox coupling of Christianity and communism. Communist symbols merge with religious symbols in the imagery of the poem. Line 5 evokes not only Christ's crown of thorns, but a fist raised in anger: symbol of the workers' Revolution. This paves the way for line 10, where one important image unites the blood of the hostages, the blood of Christ, and the red star which symbolises the Soviet Union: 'Et il y a un astre rouge sur notre amour.' The principal connection between Christ and the hostages remains of course, their common suffering; He is invoked as 'Christ / dont les mains sont de sang pour toucher le sang.'[60] So the figure of Christ is not separate from man, but present within each of the hostages, suffering and recrucified along with them.

When, in 'Ah! Si j'avais les ailes de la colombe', Emmanuel writes that 'Dieu n'est plus' (*LGP* 119), he is expressing the same idea - apparently overlooked by the church - that God, or goodness, cannot remain intact, apart from and unaffected by the works of man. Like Masson, Emmanuel believes that God lies within man: 'que Tu m'as confié ta face en héritage / et que dépend de moi ton éternel visage' (*LGP* 118).

With God being disfigured daily within man, and Christ being recrucified by man, there was nothing to guarantee any Resurrection. The Resurrection of Christ, and the reinstatement of good and innocence which it represents, was dependent on man battling against the age-old impulse to evil that was then incarnate in Nazism. Witness the combative quality of the Resurrection described by Masson: 'la Résurrection déjà heurte de son poing d'étoiles / le front de la vieille Judée ...'.

Emmanuel makes clear his belief that the evil unleashed by Nazism is widespread, lying within all of us. This is in keeping with Christian doctrine, which teaches that we are all tainted by original sin. Again, it seemed of particular importance for Emmanuel to voice this belief during the war. This was a time when all humankind seemed drawn ineluctably towards evil, by what Emmanuel calls 'la nostalgie du chaos' (*Com* 33). The 'nostalgia' refers back to the original sin in the Garden of Eden - the 'crime inconnaissable / dont nul autre n'a su tarir la nostalgie' (*LGP* 106). That the impulse towards this original crime and the impulse towards Nazism are one and the same thing is demonstrated by the line already quoted, where Emmanuel writes that 'tout s'infond en la nostalgie de ce vert' (*Com* 17). The suggestion is that Nazism corresponded to an impulse which lies at the very heart of man's being.

In *Autobiographies*, Emmanuel pays tribute to the influence of Pascal, who believed that man was neither Satan nor God, but a chimerical, contradictory being, motivated by both demonic and godlike impulses. According to Christian doctrine, the notion of freewill depends on the coexistence of good and evil: man must be left free to choose between them. Emmanuel, under Pascal's tutelage, refused to accept that man was naturally good. Accepting this would be to deny that we have any choice in our means of apprehending the world; Emmanuel judges it necessary that we recognize our autonomy: 'Il fallait renoncer à la fable de l'homme naturellement bon, si l'on voulait définir la vraie nature de l'homme, et lui restituer l'autonomie de son destin' (p. 228). This freedom of choice is, however, perilous:

> La preuve la plus terrible de notre liberté, notre puissance de destruction nous la fournit: nous pouvons faire plus que Satan - anéantir l'humain dans l'homme. Rien ne nous dit que notre

> conviction la plus intime soit irréductible, et l'humain assuré en nous: rien, sinon la présomption d'un esprit mal attentif, ne nous permet de nous croire des justes. (p. 229)

The injustice and cruelty of Nazism, or of the *épuration* to which Emmanuel refers here, are behaviours as undeniably human as goodness or charity.

The idea that the destructive forces unleashed by Nazism issue from a diabolic impulse within all of us, or that we all contain conflicting tendencies towards good and evil, was not only voiced by Catholic poets. In the argument that opens *Seuls demeurent*, Char, too, refers to this dialectic: 'Nous tenons l'anneau où sont enchaînés côte à côte, d'une part le rossignol diabolique, d'autre part la clé angélique' (*FM* 9). When Char writes that he suffers from a lack of justice in his relations with the outside world, he emphasises that this lack is internal - the confusion of an unresolved conflict within:

> Ce dont le poète souffre le plus dans ses rapports avec le monde, c'est du manque de justice *interne*. La vitre-cloaque de Caliban derrière laquelle les yeux tout-puissants et sensibles d'Ariel s'irritent. (*FM* 65)

Char's need to invent justice in response to injustice has already been noted. So too should his awareness that the struggle had to be carried out within himself, against his own propensity for evil. In *Seuls demeurent* he writes: 'J'ai congédié la violence qui limitait mon ascendant' (p. 26); he refers to the 'bestiaire de mensonges qui le tourmentait de ses gobelins et de ses trombes' (*FM* 39), and to the 'boucher secret qu'il avait dû vaincre pour acquérir à ses yeux la tolérance de son semblable' (*FM* 40). He describes himself as 'cet homme, de fond en comble aux prises avec le Mal dont il connaît le visage vorace et médullaire' (*FM* 80), and refers in *Feuillets d'Hypnos* to 'L'Homme-au-poing-de-cancer, le grand meurtrier interne' (*FM* 128). So when he writes, as we saw, that the poet must help to assure the return of justice by a 'refus de soi' (*FM* 79), this refers not only to the poet's refusal of the injustice around him, but also to his refusal to encourage the destructive tendencies within himself.

In his preface to *Fureur et Mystère*, Yves Berger suggests one possible key to the 'mystery' alluded to in the title chosen by Char:

> Le *Mystère* serait (...) sans doute (...) le mystère de l'obstination mauvaise des hommes à ne pas se défaire de la part de nuit, de crimes en eux, à l'aggraver, au contraire - alors que la grâce et l'aptitude à la lumière baignent la moitié, au moins, de leur nature. (*FM* 6)

In Char's work, both aspects of man's nature are voiced. There is the 'terror' - expressed, as Berger says, in Apocalyptic visions of 'tout un Moyen Age de la souffrance et de l'homicide' (*FM* 8) - and there is the 'counter-terror', where Char appeals to innocence and joy in finely wrought descriptions of the countryside around him. A good example of both is *Feuillets d'Hypnos* 141 (*FM* 123), where Char delays what he calls his inevitable meeting with the devil by a long, exuberant description of his surroundings. Char seems to invest beauty with the same qualities that poets such as Jouve and Emmanuel ascribe to grace; he believes that there is in man a potential and a longing for beauty which is constantly thwarted by a propensity to give free rein to an equally strong destructive force.

This is all susceptible to Freudian interpretation. The labels 'good' and 'evil' could well be substituted by the terms 'Eros' and 'Thanatos'. Indeed, both Jouve and Emmanuel draw comparisons between the Christian idea of the Fall - of man visiting destruction upon himself - and the Freudian idea that there is a death-wish or a destructive tendency programmed into each of us. In 'Inconscient, spiritualité et catastrophe', written in 1933 as a preface to *Sueur de sang*, Jouve talks of the importance of the discoveries made in psychoanalysis. He associates the death instinct, the rise of fascism and the Apocalypse:

> aujourd'hui les instruments de la Destruction nous encombrent; les iniquités pourrissantes des nations font de l'Europe "la grande prostituée...assise sur une bête écarlate couverte de noms de blasphème ayant sept têtes et dix cornes ..." (p. 144)

Referring back to the war in 1967, Emmanuel makes the same connection, alluding to 'L'instinct de mort, lié à la Faute, (...) dont la force destructrice est l'une des composantes radicales de tout homme.'[61]

As far back as 1933, Freud himself had outlined a connection between man's recurring tendency to make war, and the destructive impulse that he believed to inhere in our psychic make-up: 'la propension à la guerre est un produit de la pulsion

destructrive'. He describes the destructive tendency in man in the following terms:

> cette pulsion agit au sein de tout être vivant et (...) tend à le vouer à la ruine, à ramener la vie à l'état de matière inanimée. Un tel penchant mérite véritablement l'appellation d'instinct de mort, tandis que les pulsions érotiques représentent les efforts vers la vie.[62]

Freud's discoveries of the unconscious and its structures were viewed by Jouve as evidence both of the terrifying complexity of human existence, and of the conflicting energies hidden within man. Jouve accepts Freud's account of our psyche being composed of two impulses held in conflict. He was convinced that the tension between the two, always insoluble, would at some time have explosive impact on society. This explosive 'irruption sociale des instincts' (*En miroir*; p. 90), was what Jouve referred to in 1933 as 'la catastrophe'. In his preface to *Sueur de sang*, Jouve followed Freud in asserting that the political tension then present in Europe was an exteriorization of man's propensity for self-destruction:

> La catastrophe la pire de la civilisation est à cette heure possible parce qu'elle se tient dans l'homme, mystérieusement agissante, rationalisée, enfin d'autant plus menaçante que l'homme sait qu'elle répond à une pulsion de la mort déposée en lui. (p. 143)

During the war, Emmanuel would refer back to these ideas voiced by Freud and Jouve. In 'L'Utilisation des mythes', he argues that the war is one of many symptoms of an extreme crisis in the spiritual and psychic make-up of man:

> Une révolution psychique, dont l'ampleur nous est encore inconnue, est en train de s'opérer dans l'homme. (...) L'angoisse de l'époque est à son comble, et la catastrophe, loin d'en être l'effet, n'en est qu'un symptôme entre bien d'autres. (p. 64)

Again, from a different perspective, we have an idea that this war was considered to be internal as well as external to man, and that the fight against Nazism was essentially a fight to contain tendencies that lie within all of us.

3. HITLERISM INHERENT IN MAN. A LASTING NEED FOR RESISTANCE

That Nazism corresponded to some fundamental impulse within man is also suggested by references to Nazism exploiting the seamier side of human nature.

Seghers writes that 'le diable vend à la criée / La part la moins bonne des hommes' (*DP* 50), and Char refers to 'un mal qui prend appui sur les points les plus déshonorés de la nature humaine' (*FM* 79).

The same thing is suggested by references to man being contaminated by Nazism. (To say, as some Resistance poets did, that Nazism profited from a corruption of man, is to admit at least man's capacity to be corrupted.) After the war, Seghers was to say that the most devastating effect of the Nazi system was to have 'perverti profondément l'homme, quel qu'il soit, dans tous les pays, et en lui-même'.[63] Marcenac writes of his Nazi Occupiers that 'leur souffle / Ternit nos miroirs Nos images' (*CF* 26). One of the most shocking statements of Nazism's enduring perversion of man is found in Scheler's 'Qui perd gagne', written after the discovery of concentration camps and mass graves:

> Par leur mortier d'os, de sanies et de sang broyé dans
> le gâchoir des camps les bâtisseurs du temple de mémoire
> pestilent ont assuré pour mille ans sa durée, et des
> fragments de chair de leurs victimes nous ont éclaboussés. (*LT* 45)

It is by no means to diminish the horror felt by poets such as Scheler to argue that this inhumanity and these crimes are inscribed within all of us.

In certain poems written during and just after the war, there was this same recognition of a general capacity for violence in the phenomenon of Nazism.

Emmanuel's poem 'Je me suis reconnu' is a very powerful expression of his belief that the diabolical, tyrannical force of Nazism is present within all humankind. He writes of the war as a time when 'nul n'est sûr de n'être un bourreau, où mon ombre / est mon geôlier peut-être aux ordres du tyran' (*Com* 51). The hatred that assails the 'tyrant' is, like evil itself, legion:

> (...) sa haine en tout homme est si forte, qu'un seul
> soudain se lève Légion. Je suis cet homme
> mon nom est la syllabe muette de son nom,
> et toi aussi tu es cet homme! tu jouis
> de sa haine comme d'une âme toute neuve
> Il te suffit d'ouvrir les yeux et d'écouter
> et tu es le tyran, tu es le Mal en marche (*Com* 53)

Similarly, in 'Les saints innocents' Emmanuel cries out to God: 'suis-je un Hérode teint du sang de ces enfants?' (*LGP* 103) and concludes that we are 'Hérodes, tous,

tant que nous sommes!' (*LGP* 103).

Tardieu also shares the shame of Nazism in 'Charniers d'otages', where he writes of the executioners and monsters hidden in our memories. The remorse which he says we all feel for this awful instance of inhumanity says a lot about the part we might well have played in it ourselves:

> Cachés dans notre mémoire
> comme nos propres remords
> bourreaux monstres assassins
> qu'avez-vous fait de ces têtes (*JP* 103)

The sense of collective responsibility and guilt expressed in these examples is further measure of the poets' conviction that the totality of man was implicated and at stake in the war against Nazism. It was considered to be a trial of humanity in which our inner impulses towards good, towards love and towards life were being tested to breaking point against the coexistent and conflicting tendencies of cruelty and destruction. For these poets at least, the metaphysical dimension of the war clearly went beyond what was merely episodic.

By highlighting our general disposition for evil or destruction, it was by no means the intention of these Resistance poets simply to restate the old essentialist, fatalist argument that man will always make war on man. The beginning of this section outlined the belief that justice had to be recreated through resistance to injustice; in Resistance poetry, the need for combat is always stressed. The poet's function, as Emmanuel saw it during the war, was to reveal to man 'la nature de ses monstres, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur, et [l'appeler] à la lutte et à la victoire sur eux'. (see note 52)

It was vital for the poets to illustrate the inner nature of the struggle: to write about the war as a time when, in the words of Jouve, 'chaque coeur humain / Est l'objet de l'affreuse bataille des anges' (*VP* 181). Not to do so would have been to ignore an important part of the totality of man, and of the totality of the threat of Nazism.

When, with unwavering optimism, Eluard predicts an end to the present injustice, his message is clear that injustice will only cease when each and every man breaks away from an enemy within:

> Nous brisons les serrures rouillées de l'injustice
> Des hommes vont venir qui n'ont plus peur d'eux-mêmes

> Car ils sont sûrs de tous les hommes
> Car l'ennemi à figure d'homme disparaît (*OC* I 1101)

In 'Les fleurs de Buchenwald', Marcenac expresses the same battle in almost identical terms:

> Nous défendions un bien commun à tous les hommes
> Nous n'opposions la mort au visage des ennemis
> Qu'au nom du jour où l'ennemi
> Aura perdu le visage de l'homme (*CF* 60)

Alongside such optimism, one of the lasting messages of Resistance poetry is that the fight for good or for justice is ever to be recommenced. In 1947, Emmanuel wrote that 'la vraie guerre, la guerre civile de l'âme, n'est pas encore terminée' (*Aut* 207-8). One of the reasons why, as Eluard puts it in 'Faire vivre', 'Ceci est de tous les temps' (*OC* I 1275), is that the conflict between impulses that can be labelled good and evil, Eros and Thanatos, terror or counter-terror, is an integral part of our make-up, and therefore constant. It is, I believe, this everlasting, internal, struggle to which Char refers when he writes in *Feuillets d'Hypnos* that 'cette guerre se prolongera au-delà des armistices platoniques' (*FM* 87). The seriousness of Char's message here is relayed by a rather uncharacteristic solemnity, when he commands his reader, as he would command his fellow partisans:

> Ne souriez pas. Ecartez le scepticisme et la résignation, et préparez votre âme mortelle en vue d'affronter intra-muros des démons glacés analogues aux génies microbiens. (*FM* 87)

CONCLUSION

The idea of man that can be formed from a study of Resistance poetry is, by its very nature, inconclusive and interrogative. At the same time, the whole of this chapter lays emphasis on the fact that, against the threat of Nazism, Resistance poets were defending a certain concept of man: as Emmanuel puts it: 'une vérité de l'homme, universelle' (*Aut* 22-3). The fundamental, universal 'truth' about human existence that the poets stressed repeatedly, is that in direct opposition to the totalitarian image of man, we are complex, heterogeneous beings in constant need of redefinition.

Resistance poets have a firmly dialectical view of man's existence. In *Proêmes*, Ponge writes that 'la notion de l'homme est proche de la notion d'équilibre. Une sorte de ludion. (...) Entre deux infinis, et des milliards de possibles, un ludion' (p. 202). Man's only essence, in other words, is to effect a balance between opposites. Amongst the balancing acts through which we realise ourselves, Ponge mentions our desire for the absolute, coupled with our ability to live in the relative (p. 203) and our genetic make-up coupled with personality or originality. To these, Ponge and other Resistance poets added, as we have seen, the balance between conflicting tendencies or tropisms within man, and the balance between our singular and our collective selves. The absolute nature of totalitarianism disrupted all these balances, promoting a fixed image of man determined by genetic inheritance, giving free rein to the evil or destructive tendencies in man, and taking both individualism and collectivism to new extremes. Maintaining a dialectical view of existence was an effective counteraction to such a threat.

Entirely in keeping with this dialectical perspective is the idea that man is constituted or realised as a relation between the self and the outside world. The poets put forward the view that our only essence or identity lies in this relation.

Inseparable at the time from their desire to defend man was their desire to defend language: at all times the concern of poetry. The inseparability of the two derives from the fact that the relations we establish between ourselves and the outside world are themselves established in language. As Seghers writes:

> Je vis au carrefour des mots
> C'est pour atteindre mon visage
> C'est pour toucher, ah! par pitié
> Un peu de présence réelle
> Pour m'assurer que je suis là (*DP* 67)

Language, Seghers believes, is the very substance of man. In 'Poète', he writes:

> Au monstre des secrets je plie sans jamais rompre
> Jusqu'à l'existence et la voix,
> (...)
> Il n'est de réel que de dire. (*DP* 81)

Already before the war, Ponge was stating his position in regard to language. In 'Des raisons d'écrire' (1929-30), he writes that man resides entirely in language: 'O hommes! Informes mollusques! (...) Vous n'avez pour demeure que la vapeur commune de votre véritable sang: les paroles. (...) Tout n'est que paroles' (*Pr* 114-5). Marcenac, too, believes that his only real domain is language. In a poem entitled 'Le langage', he writes: 'Entre la chose et le regard / J'ai construit ma maison et pris mes habitudes' (*CC* 160): this house is constructed entirely of words.

According to Emmanuel, the writers' duty is to 'mettre leur responsabilité dans leurs mots' (*Aut* 169) and so to preserve 'l'intégrité de l'homme' (*Aut* 169). This task, it seemed, was particularly vital during the war, when man's integrity was being further challenged by what the poets perceived as an abuse of language by the enemy. In the words of Emmanuel again: 'défendre l'homme, c'est défendre les mots dont il se sert (d'autant plus que l'ennemi (...) s'était installé au coeur des mots)' (*Aut* 262).

The poets' defence of language, an integral part of their defence of both man and France, is examined in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. *Poésie 43*, 12 (janvier-février 1943), p. 77.
2. Ibid, p. 64. Emmanuel's 'L'Utilisation des mythes' is referred to henceforward by the abbreviation *UM*. The page references that follow are to this issue of *Poésie 43*.
3. J. Marcenac, preface to *Pablo Neruda*, p. 57.
4. A. Rosenberg, *Mythus*, p. 7.
5. Ibid, p. 15.
6. J-P. Sartre, *Les Carnets de la Drôle de Guerre*, p. 34.
7. G. Mounin, *La Communication poétique* précédé de *Avez-vous lu Char?*, p. 179.
8. Ibid, p. 185.
9. Quoted in K. Axelos, *Héraclite et la philosophie*, pp. 50-51.
10. Char acknowledges this influence in *Partage formel* IX and XVII (*FM* 67,69). In 1948 he wrote an introduction to Yves Battistini's *Héraclite d'Ephèse* (*RBS* 100-1).

11. P. Seghers, *Pierre Seghers*, p. 7.

12. In C. Haroche, 'Entretien Jean Marcenac', p. 48.

13. S. Velay, *René Char*, p. 107.

14. The title of one of Frénaud's poems (*RM* 61).

15. This similarity is only surprising if it is admitted that Christianity necessarily proposes an essentialist account of our existence, or that it always puts forward the view that man is a definable being, created once and for all in the image of God.
    Certain poets objected to Christianity precisely because they believed that it was essentialist. Frénaud's aversion to religion has been noted, briefly, on page 168. In *Vivre en poesie*, Guillevic attacks established, institutionalised religion: 'En somme, on pourrait dire que toute religion est une poésie qui a trop bien réussi et qui par là-même s'est figée, s'est sclérosée. Le travail de fouilles, de creusement s'est arrêté. Les choses sont données une fois pour toutes, et il n'y a plus qu'à commenter et appliquer' (p. 36). What he appears to object to here is that, in having sealed itself off from its original, dynamic creativity, and posited man as one of its known, established facts, religion has divested itself of humanity.
    At the same time, both Frénaud and Guillevic make frequent reference in their work to Christian mythology: two of Frénaud's most important poems are entitled 'Les Rois Mages' and 'Plainte du roi mage'; there are echoes of church ceremony in Guillevic's 'Rites' (*Terraqué*); Guillevic wrote psalms in *versets claudéliens* and entitled two of his collections of poetry *Requiem* and *Magnificat.*
    It was Guillevic's opinion that poets should rehumanize the rites and the gestures that religion has calcified into a fixed form: 'Il s'agit de réhumaniser les gestes du célébrant' (*VP* 37). The poet can then redeem from religion the creative concept of man that had originally invested it: 'Par la poésie, il s'agit de reprendre à la religion notre bien, c'est-à-dire tout ce que l'homme y a investi de lui-même, de ses possibilités' (*VP* 36-7). This is similar to what Ponge writes in 'Notes premières de l'homme': 'Il a sorti de lui-même l'idée de Dieu. Il faut qu'il la réintègre en lui-même' (*Pr* 197); 'Il faut réintégrer l'idée de Dieu à l'idée de l'homme' (*Pr* 203).
    In other words, it is not Christianity itself so much as the institutionalisation of Christianity that such poets consider to be at fault. Even Marcenac is prepared to admit that a Christian can contribute to a revolutionary ontology 's'il adhère à ce mouvement de l'homme vers son devenir' (Haroche interview, p. 48). Similarly, Mounin admits that 'le syncrétisme chrétien, qui contient tout, peut bien contenir aussi de quoi s'accommoder des volontés de changer l'homme' (*CP* 181).
    I would suggest (and this is borne out in the rest of the chapter) that the image of man that is put forward by Emmanuel is invested with the same qualities of self-determination as the concept of man that is proposed by materialist or atheist Resistance poets.

16. A. Hitler, *Mon Combat* , Nouvelles éditions latines, 1934, p. 109.

17. Quoted in K. Axelos, op. cit., p. 65.

18. Mounin, op. cit., p. 172.

19. Jean Lescure, 'André Frénaud ou la poésie à hauteur d'homme', p. 88.

20. M. Riffaud, *Le Poing fermé*, p. 79.

21. H. Larouche Davis, *Robert Desnos. Une voix, un chant, un cri*, p. 122.

22. Sartre, op. cit., p. 34.

23. In the second edition of *Les Rois Mages*, published in 1946, Frénaud changed the poem's original title to 'Dasein'. Finding this title too obviously philosophical, he changed it back again in the 1966 edition.

24. E. Noulet, *Jean Tardieu*, p. 37.

25. The attitude displayed in this last poem comes close to nominalism. It is evidence of Tardieu's will to promote a belief in our importance in regard to our surroundings. Without us, the outside world would disintegrate into insignificance. Eluard takes this idealist stance even further in 'Le droit et le devoir de vivre' (*LO* II):

    Il n'y aurait rien
    Pas un insecte bourdonnant
    Pas une feuille frissonnante
    (...)
    Il y aurait un homme
    N'importe quel homme
    Moi ou un autre
    Sinon il n'y aurait rien. (*OC* I 1068)

26. Guillevic, 'Le Poète et le monde social', p. 19.

27. First published in *Le Figaro*, 26 juillet 1941, p. 2. Part of this article is reproduced in *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Vol. I, p. 131.

28. J. Macquarrie, *Existentialism*, p. 103.

29. C. Haroche, op.cit., p. 49.

30. Daniel Bergez, *Eluard ou le rayonnement de l'être*, p. 14.

31. Ibid, p. 11.

32. P. Emmanuel, 'Le Je universel dans l'oeuvre d'Eluard', in *Le Monde est Intérieur.*

33. M. Cabon, 'Conversation avec André Frénaud', p. 28.

34. G.-E. Clancier, *André Frénaud*, p. 32.

35. See *Feuillets d'Hypnos* , Nos. 9, 11, 27, 30, 64, 67, 69, 76, 89.

36. S. Velay, op.cit., p. 112.

37. Margarete Zimmermann, 'Pierre Seghers: "L'action et le rêve vont ensemble pour un poète". Entretiens sur la poésie et la résistance (juin 1980)' p. 17.

38. Ibid, pp. 16-17.

39. Published under the pseudonym of Margeride in *L'Honneur des poètes II* . *Europe* , p. 73.

40. Published under the pseudonym of Malo Lebleu in *L'Honneur des Poètes*, p. 37.

41. For part of this interpretation of Bérimont's poem, I am indebted to Ian Higgins's article, 'France, soil and language: some Resistance poems by Luc Bérimont and Jean Marcenac'.

42. Loys Masson, 'Aux martyrs de Châteaubriant', p. 1.

43. At the time of writing this, Ponge would certainly have been wise to the connotations impressed upon the term 'joie virile' by Nazism. His alignment of the term with 'fraternité et bonheur' is, I believe, evidence of his will both to suppress these connotations and to combat, through *fraternité*, the ideology which gave rise to them.

44. Rosenberg, op.cit., p. 17.

45. Ibid, pp. 16-17.

46. According to Hollingdale, 'Volk' is referred to in Nietzsche's work as a mass or a rabble, never as a community. The assertion that Germans were a uniquely gifted race is countered by Nietzsche's claim that as far as Germany extends, it ruins culture. Anti-semitism is qualified in his work as an obscenity. (R.J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche*, p. 28.)

47. *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Vol. XVI, p. 2.

48. Ibid, Vol. IX, p. 113.

49. Ibid, Vol. II, p. 386.

50. P. Berger, 'Conversation avec René Char', p. 10.

51. J. Macquarrie, op.cit., p. 209.

52. 'Sauver l'homme d'abord,' p. 2.

53. P. Guerre, op.cit., p. 28.

54. Jean Cassou, *Entretiens avec Jean Rousselot*, p. 102.

55. Ibid, p. 102.

56. Mounin, op.cit., p. 175.

57. Guerre, op.cit., p. 26.

58. Zimmermann, op.cit., p. 26.

59. *La Patrie se fait tous les jours*, p. 42.

60. The demythification of Christ is a feature of Masson's work in general. In *L'Etoile et la clef*, for example, he describes Christ as 'un homme (...) qui, étant homme-Dieu, est l'homme total, à la fois le plus malheureux et le plus heureux, le plus nu, le plus fort, le plus désarmé. (...) Il est cette rumeur de la misère qui bat à la falaise des siècles, l'homme-foule' (p. 169).

61. P. Emmanuel, *Le Monde est intérieur*, p. 157.

62. Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, *Pourquoi la guerre?*, p. 53.

63. Zimmermann, op.cit., p. 23.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEFENCE OF LANGUAGE IN RESISTANCE POETRY

> La lutte pour le langage l'est aussi contre la barbarie, et parmi les conquêtes de l'homme remises en question par notre temps, il en est une, essentielle et la plus menacée: la Parole. (Emmanuel)[1]

INTRODUCTION

'les oeuvres les plus significatives de ces années quarante, ne sont peut-être pas celles qu'on imagine, mais celles qui remettent en question le langage et l'expression.' (Camus)[2]

The defence of language was highlighted during the war as a matter of particular seriousness and urgency. The suppression of free speech throughout the Occupation, coupled with an official language which communicated only the values of the Occupiers and of the Collaboration, led to an increased awareness of 'ce que parler veut dire'. In his article of this title, Michel Leiris writes:

> En même temps que la parole semblait minée par une maladie très pernicieuse ou s'effondrer dans la négativité du silence, l'on n'avait jamais saisi avec autant de netteté *ce que parler veut dire*, tout ce que met en jeu l'exercice du discours et quelles conséquences mortelles peut avoir, de façon immédiate, l'acte simple qui consiste à formuler une pensee.[3]

Leiris claims that the writer typically came to realise at the time that 'chaque mot qu'il dit l'engage'.[4] Sartre's notion of committed literature, codified in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, was formulated during the war and based on this same premise. The awareness that using language is a serious matter, which implicates the speaker or writer, was increased by the fact that what was said and written during the war had uncommonly conspicuous consequences. Witness, for example, the denunciations of Jews, Communists and Resisters that were made in the collaborationist press, which could well have led to the pursuit, imprisonment and execution of the persons named.

Witness also the fact that, according to figures established by the 'Association des écrivains combattants', one hundred and fifteen writers were executed during the war.[5] It was difficult to ignore then that the use of language was itself an action, as consequential as any other. An awareness of this underlies and is elicited by the use of language, and by the thematic foregrounding of language, in Resistance poetry.

It was argued that the defence of language is intimately linked in the poetry with the defence of France. Their interdependence is explained by the fact that the poets considered the French *patrie* as a spiritual territory, in which certain values and ideals are perpetually restated and communicated. It is important to stress that Resistance poets were not so much concerned with an abstract philosophy of expression as with a concrete defence of the *langue française*. Any experience of language in general is, of course, realised in a particular language. More importantly, the *langue française* was considered by Resistance poets to be under particular attack during the war, when it was used to communicate values and ideals that were foreign to their concept of *patrie* (*le pays réel*). In defending the French language against this perceived attack, Resistance poets affirmed the *langue française* as the place in which ideals associated with *le pays réel* are shared. A number of Resistance poets lay emphasis on this in a collective article, entitled 'Poésie et défense de l'homme':

> Au-dessus des coteries de maréchaux, d'amiraux et de politiciens au petit pied, c'est l'affirmation d'une communauté française qui s'exprima dans l'usage d'un langage où les poètes prirent à charge de défendre la vérité du verbe, et de maintenir, en dépit de la corruption et du mensonge, la réalité d'une conception de l'homme que n'avait pu ridiculiser la défaite.
> (*Almanach des Lettres françaises*, p. 74)

As these poets highlight, the defence of the *langue française* was also a defence of a certain concept of man; this, as we have seen, was taken to be the most precious of the ideals protected by the French *patrie*. As we shall see illustrated in the course of this chapter, the perceived attack on language is often associated in the poetry with an attack on man. The poets' defence of language was consciously a resistance to the way in which man was being spoken about by the authorities, as well as to the concept of man that was implied in the way that language was used, officially.

Within this chapter, emphasis is given to language as a central theme of Resistance poetry. It is essential to stress that language is also a vital component of this, as any other, poetry. For this reason, and because certain aspects of the theme of language only emerge through a particular use of language in the poetry, I have included in this mainly thematic study two detailed commentaries, and several brief, illustrative analyses of individual poems or parts of poems. The concluding commentary is intended to continue this process, of complementing what has been largely a thematic approach to Resistance poetry with a study of how some of its major themes are realised in language.

The first part of this chapter draws attention to the problems of expression that were faced by Resistance poets, as they are highlighted in the poetry. It argues that the problem of linguistic inadequacy, a major concern in French poetry from Mallarmé onwards, was aggravated during the war by two main factors. First, certain incidents that the poets wished to record were considered so inhuman as to defy expression. This point is illustrated by an analysis of Pierre Emmanuel's 'Près de la fosse', which describes the poet's reaction to the sight of an improvised mass grave, discovered in the Vercors. Second, the official use of language, which is referred to throughout the chapter as *la fausse parole*, was thought to have corrupted and contaminated the common language to such an extent that any utterance seemed bound to be compromised by it.

One possible response to such problems was to remain silent. The option of silence, which was taken by several poets during the war, is examined in the second part of the chapter, along with the theme of silence, which has a significant place in Resistance poetry. The several aspects of this theme are contained in Emmanuel's poem, 'Les dents serrées', which is analysed as a conclusion to this section.

The final part of the chapter examines the use of language that is commended and practised in Resistance poetry. It stresses that the poets used language in a manner that was consciously and conspicuously antithetic to *la fausse parole*. Resisting the authorities became, as much as anything else, a matter of resisting the linguistic order

that they were establishing in France. The language of the poetry is defined, accordingly, as a language of resistance: a rebel language which fought against the linguistic practices of the authorities. The official use of language is qualified in the poetry as destructive, dishonest and divisive. In opposition, the poets foregrounded and used language as an affirmation of life, of truth, and of *fraternité*. These three related features of the language of Resistance poetry are examined separately and in detail. To illustrate the 'life-affirming' nature of the poetry, attention is drawn to the poets' mythicisation of two particular incidents: the execution of hostages at Châteaubriant, and the execution of Gabriel Péri. (The poems referred to here can all be found in the appendix.) This section, and the two that follow, which describe the 'truthful' and 'fraternal' nature of the poets' use of language, involve an analytic as well as a thematic approach to language in Resistance poetry.

As we saw in the Introduction to the thesis, Resistance poetry was criticised both during and after the war for its use of language. It was charged with linguistic conservatism - exemplified, in the eyes of certain critics, by a widespread return to traditional form. Some critics claimed that its concern with chronicling the events of the Resistance took precedence over the concern with language that is proper to poetry, and gave it an intrinsically limited interest and appeal. The poetry was likened, dismissively, to propaganda. These various criticisms are met and challenged in the final part of this chapter, which pays particular attention to the poets' practice of language.

I THE INADEQUACY OF LANGUAGE

When Mallarmé expressed the desire to 'donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu'[6] he aptly summarised what has become a dominant and perhaps defining characteristic of modern French poetry: the struggle against the inadequacies of the common language. Devalued by popular usage, the sterile reflection of a sterile society, the language of the tribe is considered to be insufficient for the tasks that poets have traditionally set themselves: to give fresh voice to an experience that is familiar

and worn, or to express for the first time an experience so new that it demands an unfamiliar tongue. The problem faced by Mallarmé and his successors was how to express themselves and their own individual experience through - or rather, against - a common language that seemed woefully deficient.[7] Already a major concern for poets since the turn of the century, this problem of linguistic inadequacy was highlighted and intensified by the circumstances of the war.

In 'La Guerre Sainte'[8], a prose text written after the outbreak of war but before the occupation of France, René Daumal voiced a belief that would become a dominant theme in Resistance poetry: as an integral part of the war against Nazism there was need of a 'holy war' against an inadequate and treacherous language.

Daumal describes 'les mots' (the common linguistic currency) as enemies and traitors installed in his voice, whose claim to protect and express him constantly masks a betrayal. He refers to these words as 'Mensonges greffés sur ma chair'[9] and addresses them directly, saying: 'vous êtes du vide sculpté, du néant grimé'.[10] He describes himself waging a losing battle against their monopoly of his voice, which is stuttering, weak and inarticulate in comparison to their eloquence and force:

> Moi, je sais dire à peine quelques mots, et encore ce sont plutôt des vagissements, tandis qu'eux, ils savent même écrire. Il y en a toujours un dans ma bouche, qui guette mes paroles quand je voudrais parler. Il les écoute, garde tout pour lui, et parle à ma place, avec les mêmes mots - mais son immonde accent.[11]

Daumal warns of the need to remain alert to the fact that the common language readily betrays us, and insists on the need to struggle within it and against it to find a true and adequate voice: to use words in such a way as to combat the waywardness of a language infested with lies and treachery. Significantly, he suggests that this mighty army of words can be subjugated by poetry. At the same time he vows not to write poetry for as long as his own voice remains dominated by a vicious language. Here, words and narrator enter into dialogue:

> "Garde-nous à nos modestes places, nous promettons de t'aider.Tiens, par exemple: figure-toi que tu veuilles écrire un poème. Comment ferais-tu sans nous?"

> Oui, rebelles, un jour je vous remettrai à vos places. Je vous courberai sous mon joug, je vous nourrirai de foin, et vous étrillerai chaque matin. Mais tant que vous sucerez mon sang et volerez ma parole, oh! plutôt jamais n'écrire des poèmes![12]

Daumal's text highlights and prefigures a challenge to which many poets felt compelled to respond during the Resistance. The treachery and the inadequacy of language became increasingly evident after France was occupied, and when the force of Nazism began to manifest itself in 'unnamable' acts of inhumanity. The problem was twofold: how to use language adequately to express incidents that seemed to constitute in themselves a barrier to expression, and how to speak authentically in a language which, in the poets' minds at least, had become tarnished by the uses to which it was put during the years of the Occupation. The question of linguistic inadequacy, at all times the symptom of some perceived defect in society, was made manifestly so to poets during the Resistance. They were faced with the choice, as Daumal's text suggests, of refusing to write with a contaminated language or of fighting this contamination, fashioning their own words into weapons against it.

The two salient features of the Resistance experience which magnified an awareness of linguistic inadequacy are outlined below.

1. EXPRESSING THE UNNAMABLE

> 'Comment dire l'horreur? Quand tant de clichés l'affadissent, tant de superlatifs la trahissent, quand trop de mots l'ont rendue ordinaire et trop d'images ... presque insupportable.'[13]
>
> 'FACE A UN TEL SUJET QUE PUIS-JE?' (Ponge; 'Baptême funèbre', *Lyres* 36)

Throughout the Resistance, poets frequently faced the challenge of writing about subjects that were difficult to express. They responded in their poetry to news of the deportation and executions of friends or compatriots and to such other obvious and brutal injustices as the execution of communist hostages at Châteaubriant and Nantes, or the slaughter of hundreds of *maquisards* in the Vercors, or the massacre of the

entire village of Oradour: outrages that all defied expression. There are often direct and indirect references in the poetry to the difficulty of the subject matter and the challenge that it seems to pose to expression. A good example of this is Ponge's 'Baptême funèbre', written in 1945 to commemorate the execution of the poet and partisan René Leynaud.[14] A central theme of this excellent and extremely moving poem is the difficulty of finding the right words and of responding appropriately, without betrayal, to the idea of Leynaud's death. Faced with such a subject, Ponge has noticeably to repress his 'tremblement devant les paroles' (*Lyres* 36). Faced with the news that Maïe Politzer and Danièle Casanova were amongst the women deported to Auschwitz, Aragon is also struck by the inadequacy of words:

> Les mots sont nuls et peu touchants
> Maïe et Danièle ... Y puis-je croire?
> Comment achever cette histoire
> Qui coupe le coeur et le chant? (*MG* 27)

Alain Borne is tempted into silence by his fear of betraying the memory of the dead in ill-wrought, inappropriate words:

> Que je me taise, que je ramène le silence
> sur ces corps réduits au silence
> si je ne sais plus choisir en ma voix
> la tige lourde de pollen
> pour chanter comme l'un d'eux la lourde peine
> de n'être plus parmi les sources
> rose fanée aux heures de l'aube (*Co* 53-4)

One of the greatest challenges to expression was presented by the discovery towards the end of the war of mass graves and concentration camps. This was new evidence of the terrifying extent of Nazi inhumanity. It was violence on a scale that had never before been imagined or witnessed, let alone expressed. In a text inspired by Fautrier's paintings, 'Otages', Ponge writes that one of the most fundamental questions of the time was 'Comment se comporter en face de l'idée des otages?'. As ever, the response of poets (as poets) had to be in language if at all; yet rarely had language seemed so inappropriate or so inadequate.

Emmanuel's 'Près de la fosse', written in response to the savage killing of hundreds of *maquisards* in the Vercors, is a good example of a poem that draws attention to the difficulty of expression. A reaction to the 'unnamable' sight of a mass

grave and a typical illustration of the theme of language being inadequate, this poem has the advantage of being short enough to analyse here in some detail.

After the Liberation, Emmanuel was a member of the 'Comité départemental de Résistance' of the Drôme. His duties included organising Red Cross help for the Vercors. He was therefore one of the first to witness the atrocious scenes there: the mass graves into which the *maquisards* had hurriedly been flung; an oven in which some of them had been burned alive . In *Autobiographies* he refers to 'charniers et ruines dont le spectacle passait l'imagination' (p. 281). After several journeys to the Vercors, Emmanuel wrote a series of poems including 'Près de la fosse'. In a note appended to *Tristesse ô ma patrie*, Emmanuel says that these poems are intended to be 'la pure transcription poétique des images d'horreur' (p. 281). All of the Vercors poems highlight in different ways the struggle to overcome silence and faithfully to articulate a sense of outrage and horror. In 'Vercors', Emmanuel openly despairs of being able to express these scenes that he has witnessed, questions the efficacy of expression and takes, it seems, a vow of silence:

> J'ai vu ce qui n'a pas de nom. Crier d'horreur
> à quoi bon, tant ici l'horreur passe les bornes?
> Me taire, simplement, et voir. (...) (*TP* 92)

This assumption that the horror cannot be named is modified significantly in 'Le mur d'amiante':

> Ce qui doit être dit nul ne le saurait dire
> avec des mots si nus qu'ils ne trahissent point. (*TP* 99)

The emphasis here is on the difficulty of achieving an adequate means of expression, and not on its impossibility. The poet's cry of defeat: 'Me taire, simplement, et voir', is replaced by the claim that something must be said, notwithstanding the certainty that no words can do full justice to the subject matter.

The central theme of 'Près de la fosse' is that words cannot be found to express the horror that the poet has witnessed and experienced.

PRES DE LA FOSSE
Un soulier d'homme, une sandale de femme

... L'esprit se brise
à ces images trop exactes de la Mort,
et le poème hésite au bord du vide: dire

l'oeil vague du soulier fixant l'oubli? l'horrible
sauterelle tout près tapie? je ris de mots
qui s'épuisent en d'exsangues métamorphoses
devant ces deux déchets ces deux symboles crus
d'un crime dont la terre est encore poissée,
la même pluie qui tue les colchiques d'un jour
ravivant les grumeaux cruels du sang qui dure. (*TP* 96)

From the outset, attention is drawn to the poet's difficulty in finding words by the fact that the short opening line follows a marked hesitation. This conveys an impression of words having been dragged painfully out of silence. There is a mirroring of this effect in line 3, where the word 'dire' follows a pause emphasised by the mute 'e' of 'vide'.

The words that follow the emphatic opening silence witness no victory of language: we are told instead that the mind shatters on impact with these all too exact images of death. Here and also in lines 3 and 7, the subject matter is described as a solid, physical and self-contained structure which repels any attempt to render it in language. The poem, Emmanuel says, 'hésite au bord du vide'; as the two shoes are poised on the edge of the grave, so the poem hovers hesitantly on the edge of a void. Used in conjunction with the prepositional phrase, 'au bord de', 'vide' immediately connotes a physical entity: the ditch or grave itself. At the same time it suggests a metaphysical void, an absolute darkness and perhaps even, for Emmanuel, a spiritual death. Taken in context these several meanings all imply silence. The improvised grave is as silent as the bodies within it, and is inexpressible because of the bodies within it. The metaphysical void is expressionlessness. This connotation of silence is reinforced formally. The words 'vide' and 'dire' (utterance) are set in conflict with each other through the formal arrangement of the line (an alexandrine). They are obviously separated by punctuation. They are both given a primary stress within the line, which entirely disrupts the rhythmic balance that the opening hemistich might have led us to expect. The stress on the two adjacent words, combined with the alliteration on [d] conveys an expression of discord. The two words jar and seem to strike against each other, as if charged with conflicting poles of energy. This

reinforces the impression that they are incompatible concepts.

'Dire' is the first specific reference to utterance in the poem. The word is positioned in such a way as to disrupt the balance of the alexandrine, and the alliteration on [d] creates a stammering effect. So the formal setting and the very sound of the word 'dire' effects a sensation of inarticulateness that reinforces Emmanuel's direct references to hesitation and suggestions of silence. The fact that 'dire' is used interrogatively communicates the same impression of hesitancy, with the poet obviously questioning the validity of his words even as he voices them.

Emmanuel's alleged failure to express what he has seen is presented as being relative to the vivid visual images which inspired the poem: images which are condensed and transferred to the poet's memory of seeing two abandoned shoes at the side of the ditch. These are referred to in the poem as 'ces images trop exactes de la Mort' and 'ces deux déchets ces deux symboles crus / d'un crime dont la terre est encore poissée'. The use of the demonstrative pronoun to refer to these 'symbols' indicates their immediacy and their presence in Emmanuel's visual memory. The direct references to vision (lines 2 and 4) and the visual quality of Emmanuel's descriptions in lines 4-5 and 9-10 stand out in contrast with the reflective and self-referential nature of much of the poem. This contrast is again suggestive of a dualism or an incompatibility between the subject matter and language.

For Emmanuel, the justness or exactness of the 'ces deux déchets' (the two shoes) as symbols of the grave goes without question or comment. Paralleled syntactically in the text, they stand out disturbingly in his memory as being wholly analogous with death and crime. Faced with these unbearably exact and raw images, the poet feels that his own attempts at image-making are derisive: 'je ris des mots qui s'épuisent en d'exsangues métamorphoses'. This, he contends, is mere word-play; a futile and anaemic rhetoric which fails ridiculously to give any proper measure of the bloody scene that he has witnessed.

'Je ris des mots' opens a long unpunctuated phrase which only finishes at the end of line 8. This is unexpected after the halting, heavily punctuated phrases that preceded. With the syntax dictating that the lines run into each other, and with no

pauses or breathing spaces indicated, breath almost literally runs out (cf. 's'épuisent') in the voicing of the phrase. Emmanuel suggests strongly that this breath has been wasted on words that are themselves worn out in vain word-play. The stammering, clumsy rhythm of the previous phrases conveyed a sense of inarticulateness and suggested in this way that language is inadequate. The comparative effusion of this long phrase betokens, perhaps, inadequacy of another kind: an unseemly lack of restraint; an emotional verbal outpouring that lacks discretion.

The conciseness and exactness of the initial visual images is contrasted in different ways throughout the poem with the imprecision and inadequacy of the poet's own images: his 'exsangues métamorphoses'. In lines 4-5 Emmanuel very tentatively presents two verbal transpositions of the scene. He refers first of all to 'l'oeil vague du soulier fixant l'oubli'. Fixing his attention here on one of the shoes at the side of the grave, Emmanuel imagines its eyelet as a blankly staring eye. The eye is described as 'vague': clouded over and therefore sightless. It stares blindly and fixedly at forgetfulness - at the loss of a precise memory. The sightlessness conveyed in this description contrasts with the precision with which Emmanuel can visualise 'ces images trop exactes de la Mort'. (The semantic contrast here is again supported by sound. The fluidity of line 4, effected by the chain of liquid consonants, distinguishes itself clearly from the staccato effect achieved in 'trop exactes de'.) The suggestion here is that the poet loses from sight his subject matter (and so frustrates his purpose) in attempting to render it in language.

The second image that Emmanuel proposes is 'l'horrible sauterelle tout près tapie'. Here, the poet's attention shifts away from the shoe to a grasshopper crouched close beside the ditch. The alliteration of [t] and [p] mirrors the sharply differentiated sounds of line 2 and suggests in this way an exactness that the previous image lacked. Visually, however, this image too is blurred. The grasshopper blends in so well with its surroundings that it is difficult to bring clearly into focus. In another more significant way, the image of the grasshopper fails to match Emmanuel's strong visual memory of the grave. The insect manages quite naturally to effect a 'bloodless metamorphosis': it merges easily with its background and metamorphoses apparently

into grass, without bloodshed. The grave, on the other hand, presents the onlooker with a very gory metamorphosis. The bodies within it have been transformed into 'les grumeaux cruels du sang qui dure' and the earth surrounding it has been changed obscenely - it is sticky with the blood of the murdered partisans.

In these various ways, the images proposed by Emmanuel apparently mark a frustration of his desire to find an exact verbal equivalence of the visual images that continue to obsess him. Yet despite and also because of his protestations, Emmanuel manages more than adequately here to render in language the horror that the sight of the grave inspires. The two images analysed above are in fact fully charged with the poet's sense of outrage and fully redolent of death. They 'describe' the indescribable subject negatively, in the very extent to which they are differentiated from it.

The fact that two such normally harmless objects as an abandoned shoe and a grasshopper should come to be associated with a mass grave is itself an apparent and horrible absurdity. Applied to something as typically innocuous as a grasshopper, 'horrible' no longer strikes us as being clichéd. The word is given back its grotesqueness by the fact that the innocent and natural presence of a grasshopper beside a hole in the ground like a ditch contrasts absurdly with the nature of this particular 'ditch' and the unnatural purpose it had been made to serve.

By the same token, the image of the grasshopper implies a potential movement which sets in bitter relief the immobility of the bodies in the grave. The sense of horror here is a function of the difference between the insect's irrepressible liveliness and the absolute stillness of the dead. The same contrast between movement and immobility, life and death is synthesised in Emmanuel's first image: 'l'oeil vague du soulier fixant l'oubli'. The living eye is constantly in movement (and this is emphasised by the ease with which the poet's own gaze then shifts from the shoe to the nearby grasshopper). The eye described here is lifeless and still, just like the eyes of the dead in the nearby grave.

The poet makes no direct mention in the poem of the fact that this ditch has been used as a grave, or of the blindness and stillness of the bodies within it. Instead he infers the presence of the grave and the bodies by presenting his images most

deliberately as negatives of the scenes that he has witnessed. This is not only a measure of his discretion but a powerful expression of the extent to which these scenes defy direct contemplation.

Ironically, the poem asserts the triumph of expression in its very denial of that triumph. The object of the poem - the 'inexpressible' inhumanity incarnate in this one scene at the Vercors - is realised as a function of the extent to which it resists language. Emmanuel conveys and emphasises this resistance in a skilful control of the sounds, senses and formal patterning of the words he uses: a control which simultaneously exemplifies the power and the adequacy of language, and its contrast with the inarticulateness of laughter (cf. line 5).

Words, of course, may not be an adequate response to the inhumanity represented by the Vercors massacres. As a linguistic response, however, 'Près de la fosse' is surely exemplary, managing through its very restraint to do justice to its subject 'avec des mots qui ne trahissent point'.

2. LA FAUSSE PAROLE

> 'Réinventer les mots est la tâche du poète: tâche difficile quand il s'agit des plus simples, que l'usage courant a délavés jusqu'à les rendre inexistants; tâche irréalisable ou presque, si les mots défigurés ne sont plus que la caricature obscène de leur sens.'
> (Emmanuel; *Aut* 262)

The general problem of the inadequacy of language was also aggravated for Resistance poets by the fact that the common language was, in their minds, infected and compromised by the way in which it was used throughout the Occupation by the authorities - Occupiers and Collaborators alike. 'L'honneur compromis du langage'[15] became a dominant theme in the poetry written at the time.

There are many references in the poetry to words being diseased. Seghers, who qualifies the enemy's utterance as 'la fausse parole' in 'Octobre' (*DP* 10), refers in 'Le carrousel' to 'Les mots comme un gravier dans la bouche' (*DP* 37). In 'Finir' (*LO* I), Eluard writes that 'La charrue des mots est rouillée' (*OC* I 1022). Aragon refers to 'des mots jetés à la voirie' (*YE* 49); he talks of his own utterance being affected by a devaluation of words:

> Je dis avec les mots des choses machinales
> Plus machinalement que la neige neigeant:
> Mots démonétisés qu'on lit dans le journal,
> Et je parle avec eux le langage des gens ... (*MG* 25)

Emmanuel expresses this same contamination of language more lyrically: 'une atroce strideur de cigale envahit / la musique inviolée des sphères' (*Com* 27). From his Christian perspective, *la fausse parole* - which he often refers to as 'la Voix' - is the voice of Satan, blaspheming against the Word of God. He asks: 'fut-il jamais pareil blasphème à la Parole?' (*Com* 41) and writes that 'La Voix est une et légion comme le Mal' (*Com* 42).[16] He describes this satanic voice having possessed his own and all voices, suffocating the voice of God: 'la Voix enfoncée dans notre gorge étouffe / le Nom libérateur qui nous crierait debout' (*LGP* 98). In 'Les dents serrées', he refers again to a contaminated language seeping into the heart of people's being: 'la Voix / souillant jusqu'au secret de l'âme' (*LGP* 108).

Direct references are made to the cause or source of this new crisis of language. The poets sensed that the Occupiers had brought with them and disseminated throughout France a type of language that was alien in every way. The strangeness of the invaders' language was obviously not a simple matter of grammar and syntax. The fact that the enemy soldiers spoke German (or halting French), or that all official documents were printed in German as well as in French was of course a constant and very painful reminder that France and the French language had lost their autonomy: a symbol of cultural oppression. But above all this language was foreign and threatening because of the way in which it was used. This is illustrated in Marcenac's 'La France héroïque et ses alliés', where the poet makes a distinction between German and the various languages spoken by the Allies:

> Nos soldats sont ceux des hommes
> Ils disent vie bonheur tendresse
> Dans toutes les langues du monde
> (...)
> En face la nuit leur répond
> Elle parle l'allemand
> Elle affirme l'orgueil la haine et la puissance
> L'absurde volonté des maîtres (*CF* 51)

Similarly, in 'Chevalier-errant' Philippe Dumaine qualifies the 'langage étranger' as

'Un langage formé de cris et de blasphèmes'.[17] What the Occupiers said was a great deal more important than the fact that they said it in their mother tongue or in heavily accented French. Their language was used, as Marcenac writes, to affirm their hatred and their force: to propagate racialism, to give orders, to enforce deportations, to send millions of people to their deaths in concentration camps. It is little wonder that the German language was regarded as a terrifying symbol of violence and oppression at the time.

In the poetry, the enemy's language is often qualified as death-dealing. The satanic voice to which Emmanuel refers is also a voice of death. He describes the Occupiers collectively here as corpses breathing pestilence:

> (...) Monde
> des cadavres ne respirant que leur odeur
> cadavres absolus, nés cadavres, la Mort
> est le souffle de leur tenace inexistence
> les mots en leur palais sont un essaim grouillant
> qui parle (...) (*Com* 41)

and refers to

> celui qui vient collant ses lèvres à la plaie
> crier plus de douleur dans la chair douloureuse
> plus de peur dans la peur plus de sang dans le sang (*Com* 31)

In 'Reportage juin 1940', Max Jacob writes almost prophetically of the vicious language of the Occupier, promised as an integral part of the Nazi invasion:

> L'air dit: "Je suis la Peste et c'est mon jour d'audience
> "Viennent les coups du meurtre, les draps de la démence
> "j'accours du ciel avec des voix dans le silence!"[18]

Marcenac expresses most powerfully in 'Mort à nos ennemis ' the same idea of the enemies' words and signs serving death:

> Rien ne se lève quand ils parlent
> Leurs mots sont perclus Et leur souffle
> Ternit nos miroirs Nos images
>
> Ce qu'ilsont de vivant en eux
> S'est élevé contre la vie
> Les signes qu'ils essaient de faire
> Comme ils n'ont servi que la mort
> Elle seule peut les comprendre (*CF* 26)

This pestiferous language is dangerously contagious. In 'Je me suis reconnu' Emmanuel refers to an entire world in which the universal tongue is murder:

Notre monde où le meurtre est langue universelle
Notre monde où l'on ne se tait que pour tuer
Et tasser ensuite les mots sur les cadavres (*Com* 51)

It was the poets' firm belief that in effecting violence through their language the Occupiers also violated language itself. The idea of language being destroyed by this abuse is evoked by Marcenac in 'Au paradis noir' (where there is a striking contrast between the lyrical name Marcenac gives to the invaders, the idea of them singing in the forest, and the poet's subsequent description of the song):

Les fils de Lohengrin chantaient dans la forêt
C'était un chant de pierre un chant d'écume
C'était un chant qui cassait les paroles
Un chant dans la forêt des mots comme une hache (*CC* 85)

Fully as pernicious and as alien to these poets as the language of the German Occupiers was that of French Collaborators - of 'Ceux de nos ennemis qui parlent notre langue / Et qui sont nés sur notre sol' (Marcenac; *CF* 46). Language in general was assaulted by Nazism; the French language in particular was contaminated by the ways in which it was used by collaborators. Masson refers to 'mots français crucifiés' (*LNM* 91) and writes: 'Ils ont pris mon langage français au lasso / De gazelle qu'il était ils en ont fait un pourceau' (*LNM* 70).

From the Armistice onwards, the French language was used officially to serve the Collaboration. As the poets saw it, the words of French Collaborators were dictated by Nazism and served its purposes. This is evoked by Joseph Rovan in a poem ironically entitled 'Art poétique 40':

le roi de l'heure dicte ses arrêts
et les paroles serves du devoir
chantent la mort dans ses obscures valets.
(...)
Oh foules sacrifiées aux mots les plus impurs
le temps des trahisons et du silence est mûr.[19]

For Resistance poets, the language of the Collaboration was servile and acquiescent, used initially to accept the Armistice and then to condone and aid the acts of the Occupiers. Char refers to 'la renonciation à visage de lâche, la sainteté du mensonge, l'alcool du bourreau' (*FM* 52). The Collaborators' words were used viciously to denounce suspected communists, Jews and Resisters, to order their executions and

issue their death warrants. There were, as Audisio puts it, 'tant de voix pour proclamer notre désert!' (*PLN* 152). In 'Parce que tu es bon ...', Hugnet asks his readers to remember the denunciations made, and the lies and moral contagion spread in the collaborationist press and transmitted by radio messages:

> Souvenons-nous de ceux qui tendent l'oreille pour
> vous livrer de ceux qui écoutent aux portes de
> ceux qui donnent leur voisin.
>
> (...)
> Souvenons-nous de ceux qui étalent dans les journaux
> leur insuffisance leur dénonciations leur prose
> de valet
> de ceux qui mentent ironisent et bavent à la radio
> pour des prix de misère réglés avec la vie des autres.[20]

Once again, these attacks on man through language were taken to embody and effect a corruption of language itself. In ' "Un petit nombre d'intellectuels français s'est mis au service de l'ennemi" ', Eluard writes:

> Ils nous ont vanté nos bourreaux
> Ils nous ont détaillé le mal
> Ils n'ont rien dit innocemment
>
> Belles paroles d'alliance
> Ils vous ont voilées de vermine
> Leur bouche donne sur la mort (*ARA; OC* I 1255)

The destruction of language through the destructive use of language is signalled again by Eluard in *La Dernière nuit* :

> Ce petit monde meurtrier
> Confond les morts et les vivants
> Blanchit la boue gracie les traîtres
> Transforme la parole en bruit (*OC* I 1099)

People were being attacked here on two fronts. There were the immediate victims of the denunciations and the execution warrants. There were the Châteaubriant hostages, for example, or Gabriel Péri. Less obviously but just as perniciously, people were being attacked through the corruption of language embodied in the denunciations and lies that had become official and daily linguistic currency. Michel Leiris refers to this attack in 'Corruption':

> Les hommes
> torturés dans leur corps
> et pourris jusque dans leurs mots
> dont tant sont aujourd'hui déviés
> de leur pôle naturel [21]

Leiris returned to this same idea in 'Ce que *parler* veut dire', written after the Liberation:

> Durant les quatre années d'oppression qui viennent de s'achever, c'est une épreuve des plus rudes qu'a subie la parole. Comme s'il s'était agi, apparemment, d'attaquer l'homme là où son humanité même se fait la plus manifeste, des outrages sanglants ont été infligés à cette faculté qu'il a d'extérioriser ses pensées par la voix ou par l'écrit.[22]

The paralysing effect that this perceived corruption of language had on man is evoked by Emmanuel in *Cantos*: 'Quand on a tort d'avoir raison / qu'importe de rester le même' (p. 15) and by Tardieu in 'Le paysage':

> Si les meilleurs sont enfermés dans un long supplice,
> s'il n'y a plus que le mensonge qui se montre, chamarré
> de fausses prairies,
> Si quelqu'un te dit: "Admire le soleil!" - et tu ne
> vois que le miroitement de la boue, ou bien: "Fais ton
> devoir!" - et on te tend un couteau pour égorger ta mère
> et ton frère,
> (...)
> Tu ne peux plus avancer, tu n'oses plus regarder ni
> entendre. (*JP* 93)

The debilitating lies which bolstered the Occupation and the Collaboration are referred to regularly in Resistance poetry. These lies are omnipresent, as Jouve suggests in 'Le bois des pauvres',

> Ils ont couvert les colonnades d'ombre
> De mensonge, ils ont tapissé les espoirs
> De mensonge, ils ont mis le mensonge en les songes
> Ils ont rempli le ciel d'aérien mensonge (*VP* 239)

'Dénaturer les noms des choses'[23] had become an integral part of the linguistic order of the day. In 'Le Langage', Tardieu writes:

> Ils ont souillé de sang et de boue les mots les plus sacrés. Ils ont déguisé le bourreau en sauveur, confondu à dessein le bon et le mauvais larron, pour tenter les âmes faibles.[24]

Aragon refers to the same process of distorting the meaning of words in 'Les Folies-giboulées': 'Le noir est blanc le défendu permis / Le meilleur est le pire' (*YE* 52) and in 'Gloire':

> La trahison bat le tambour
> Fait du devoir un calembour
> Et sous la livrée ennemie
> Dit noir le blanc crime l'amour (*DF* 74)

He alludes to this again in 'De l'exactitude historique en poésie':

> les sorciers de Vichy et les dragons de Germanie avaient donné à toutes les paroles une valeur incantatoire pervertie, rien ne s'appelait plus de son nom, et toute grandeur était avilie, toute vertu bafouée, persécutée (...) (*EEP* 96)

and in his preface to *L'Honneur des poètes II.Europe*:

> le langage était détourné de son cours, les mots étaient dénaturés, pervertis par ces usurpateurs qui s'étaient emparés du vocable France lui-même. (p. 7)

We have already seen in Chapter II how the words 'France' and 'patrie' were (from the Resisters' viewpoint) distorted by the Collaboration. Leiris refers to these and other disfigured words in 'Ce que *parler* veut dire'. He writes of 'mots détournés de leur sens aux fins d'une propagande qui exigeait un camouflage chaque jour plus poussé' and gives the following examples:

> c'est ainsi qu'"Europe" signifiait "hégémonie nazie", que "respect des contrats" voulait dire "trahison", "révolution nationale" "métamorphose d'une nation libre en un pays d'esclaves écrasé sous le talon ennemi".[25]

This harmful change in the significance of words was also remembered by Emmanuel after the war in *Autobiographies*. He recalls the misapplication of the words 'ordre' and 'légitimité', and the 'abuse' of the word 'Juif', whose meaning had been changed almost overnight by official decree:

> nous avions toujours cru, même les pires anti-sémites, que le Juif est d'abord un homme, suivant une définition aux caractères variables selon les perspectives de pensée. Aujourd'hui, le mot Juif recevait un autre sens, absolu, sans nuances: il voulait dire bétail en surnombre, marqué pour une éventuelle extermination. (p. 209)

Emmanuel's 'Prophétie sur les nations' contains a powerful expression of the common experience of words being severed from their former and familiar meanings. It demonstrates the travesty by a pestilential voice of simple, basic words such as 'amour', 'pain' and 'liberté'. The voice says 'Amour' and is answered in terrifying images of brutality (*Com* 31); it says 'Pain' and there falls from heaven not manna but dry stones:

> "Pain" dit-il. Et sur un ciel de pierres sèches
> la famine au ventre tendu comme un tambour
> referme en vain ses mandibules d'épouvante
> sous lesquelles craquent les astres calcinés (*Com* 32);

it says 'Liberté' and

> Un ciel en trompe-l'oeil
> cimenté par des termites infatigables
> s'incurve au-dessus d'un empire ténébreux
> creusé de galeries sordides (...) (*Com* 34)

And as Emmanuel was to say in *Autobiographies*, 'on n'en finirait pas de dresser le répertoire des mots infectés par Hitler ou Vichy; cette infection dure encore' (p. 210). The Vichy and Hitlerian régimes could only live, it seemed, by perverting the sense of words. 'Joseph Delorme' recognised this clearly in 1942: 'Les Nazis redoutent les désignations rationnelles qui appellent un chat un chat. Leur domaine c'est le truquage du vocabulaire, la sophistication des notions et des termes.'[26]

By distorting the sense of words, the enemy, 'installé au coeur des mots' (Emmanuel; *Aut* 262), had attacked the integrity of language: 'la sainteté de la parole' (Tardieu). All language and every utterance seemed to be thus infected.

Faced with subjects whose horror and inhumanity seemed to defy expression, and faced with a common language that was itself unusually vicious and contaminated, the poets were left with two choices: to remain silent or to speak out as best they could in opposition.

II MUTENESS AND CLENCHED TEETH: THE THEME OF SILENCE

Certain poets chose the option of silence during the Occupation. Char, Tzara and Reverdy refused to publish any of their work until after the Liberation.[28] In *Le Chant des morts*, Reverdy evokes the deliberate suspension of his own words, referring to 'La parole vide du silence' (p. 106) and commanding himself to wait for the right moment to speak: 'Attends le moment de tordre ton bâillon' (p. 108). In 'Sous le vent plus dur', the fact that this vow of silence has been made in response to the current viciousness of language is made clear:

> (...) les aveux lassés sauvés de la torture
> Les louanges perfides dans le clair-obscur de la parole
> Sous la lame ébréchée d'une langue peu sûre
> Un abîme comblé de honte (...) (p. 122)

Reverdy's silence - a conscious rejection of a contaminated language - is what Jacques Debû-Bridel would have termed an 'eloquent silence'. In 'L'Eloquence du silence', published in *Domaine français*, Debû-Bridel argues quite a strong case for silence, stating that it was impossible to use words effectively, without betrayal, when the common language was infused with treachery:

> De quelle utilité enfin serait la parole dans une contrée où les mots les plus essentiels auraient perdu dans l'expression courante leur signification? Où chaque terme, et surtout les plus nobles, trahiraient la valeur qu'ils sont censés représenter, où le mot "amour" signifierait "haine", ou bien "fidélité" "trahison"? Pour éviter d'être compris à contresens, le sage devrait se taire en de telles contrées. (p. 94)

Char's silence was also eloquent in a different way. It marked his decision to take active part as a Resister in the armed struggle against Nazism. His 'Chant du refus' describes *a posteriori* his retreat into silence: 'Le poète est retourné pour de longues années dans le néant du père. Ne l'appelez pa , vous tous qui l'aimez' (*FM* 48). Char subtitled this poem 'Début du partisan'. In a letter written to Francis Curel explaining his reasons for not publishing any poetry at the time, Char says:

> Certes, il faut écrire des poèmes, tracer avec de l'encre silencieuse la fureur et les sanglots de notre humeur mortelle, mais tout ne doit pas se borner là. Ce serait dérisoirement insuffisant. (*RBS* 12)

Char's silence, like that of another partisan and poet, René Leynaud, eloquently symbolises and parallels the silence that accompanied the clandestine missions of armed Resisters.

Poets who chose to publish their work as part of the overall Resistance struggle sometimes evoke the theme of a combative silence: a silence that betokens a refusal of Nazism. The best-known example of silence being commended as a means of resistance is Vercors's *récit*, *Le Silence de la mer*, in which a young woman and her father refuse to speak to the very prepossessing and 'correct' German officer billeted in their home. Vercors would continue this theme of silence as resistance in 'La patience', a poem published in *L'Honneur des poètes*:

> Ce soir encore il nous faudra mordre nos lèvres
> Attendre encore en gémissant le jour qui lève

(...)
Vieillards muets serrant leurs maigres poings sans armes
(...)
Foules sans cris au masque fermé comme un mur
(...)
Haine plus dur d'être sans cri et sans haine (pp. 30-31)

The silence described by Vercors here is of a similar nature to that evoked by Tardieu in 'O pays nommé France', where Tardieu writes:

vrais visages baissés
par le même silence
vous vous reconnaissez (*JP* 92)

The silence of the 'true' faces is a silence that pleads for truth: a silence that responds to the debasement of the word 'France' referred to earlier in the poem; that betokens an unwillingness to countenance such a debasement or to voice 'France' in such a way. It is as dangerous, as tense and as indicative of refusal as the silence that André Chennevière senses in 'Paris occupé':

Paris se tait, Paris attend:
Non en fille soumise
Mais en ville qui se refuse
Dans un silence dangereux
Et qui n'est point le sommeil [29]

Another courageously combative type of silence is referred to in the poetry: the silence maintained by those prisoners who refused under torture to denounce their friends or betray their convictions. This silence is illustrated movingly in a poem written in captivity by Marianne Cohn, who was finally executed in July 1944:

Je trahirai demain, pas aujourd'hui,
Demain.
Il me faut la nuit pour me résoudre,
Il ne me faut pas moins d'une nuit
Pour renier, pour abjurer, pour trahir.

Pour renier mes amis,
Pour abjurer le pain et le vin,
Pour trahir la vie,
Pour mourir.
(...)
Aujourd'hui je n'ai rien à dire,
Je trahirai demain.[30]

The silence of hundreds of prisoners like Marianne Cohn, which betokens a strength of conviction and a courage that is scarcely possible to imagine, is acknowledged gratefully in Resistance poetry. One example of the homage paid to the silence of

these prisoners is Tardieu's 'Le vent':

> Ah tant de douleur dominée, tout à coup
> la bouche sent monter le sel noir et le sang -
> O vous qui retenez l'espoir entre vos dents
> le regard agrandi par l'aurore future,
> pardonnez à tous ceux qui parleront de vous! (*JP* 97)

But as Tardieu then goes on to say in the poem (and to intimate by the very fact of having written it), this commendable, excellent silence cannot, *in due respect to the prisoners*, be maintained by those who are not in captivity or under the threat of torture. He argues most powerfully that it is the duty of those who enjoy a relative freedom to speak out on behalf of the prisoners - to say the things that they could no longer say and to spread freely (like the wind of the title) the words that they had been compelled to suppress:

> Les mots que vous n'avez pas dits sous la torture
> par la voix des vivants se répandent en haine:
> une vague de plus pour chaque homme qui meurt
> s'échappe et descendant à travers les barreaux
> va grossir lentement les nappes souterraines
> qui feront sauter l'ombre et le mur des tombeaux. (*JP* 97-8)

The same idea that expression is now a moral imperative is contained in the superb aphorism which ends Tardieu's 'Vacances': 'Puisque les morts ne peuvent plus se taire / est-ce aux vivants de garder leur silence?' (*JP* 87).[31]

For poets committed to man, who believed that language is our very substance and that, as Seghers puts it, 'Le meilleur moyen de détruire l'homme, de le trucider, est aussi de mettre en cause le langage',[32] it was imperative to speak out in opposition to the corrupt language of the time. As Aragon writes in 'Arma virumque cano', 'mon chant ne peut se refuser d'être; parce qu'il est une arme lui aussi pour l'homme désarmé, parce qu'il est l'homme même, dont la raison d'être est la vie' (*YE* 30).

To remain silent in the face of a corrupt, inhumane system and its corrupt language would have been to allow free rein to that system and consent to the destruction of both man and language. This is certainly how Emmanuel viewed it at the time and after the war, when he writes:

> même si je me tais *contre lui* [sc. the legitimate order of the day], je me rends complice de son arbitraire: il parle, il violente ce langage qui me rend solidaire de tous; il introduit la division au coeur de l'être, la terreur dans l'essence des mots (*Aut* 210)

Ponge was of the same opinion. In 'Pages bis' he writes: '*Il faut parler*: le silence en ces matières est ce qu'il y a de plus dangereux au monde. On devient dupe de tout. On est définitivement fait, bonard (*sic*)' (*Pr* 162).

In 'Poésie et résistance', Jean Tortel also questions the efficacy of resisting Nazism through silence. Silence, he says, would too easily have been mistaken for consent. He claims that the first real manifestation of resistance in the poetry was the initial resistance to the temptation of silence: 'La première manifestation de la résistance poétique, et non la moins grave, a été de surmonter *la tentation du silence*' (p. 188).

This act of overcoming silence is referred to by Jean Rousselot:

> Il n'y avait que le silence
> Derrière chaque mot volé
> La route expirait dans les pierres
> Entre les murs écroulés
>
> Et pourtant le dernier poète
> Tendait l'oreille vers la mer
> Et cherchait encore à saisir
> L'insaisissable oiseau de la parole.[33]

and by Masson, in what are more obviously the tones of a Resister:

> Mots, il est temps que vous dardiez du silence se faisant
> vivant comme une main
> Mots aimés de ma patrie, Equité, Charité!
> (...)
> Mots de mon poème, mon poème vous a faits de chair et de
> sang
> (...)
> J'ai fait jaillir du feu de votre pelage roux, mots qui
> chantent la chaleur ('L'Automne'; *PI* 36)

An obvious point that it is essential to remember is that Resistance poets were not only tempted but *forced* into silence by the legitimate order of the day. Masson's words here were illegal words which could well have had him executed. This enforced silence is referred to directly by Aragon in 'Richard Coeur-de-lion': 'Je ne dois pas dire ce que je pense / Ni murmurer cet air que j'aime tant' (*YE* 73), and by Sartre, in 'La République du silence':

> Nous avions perdu tous nos droits, et d'abord celui de parler; on nous insultait en face chaque jour, et il fallait nous taire; (...) puisqu'une police toute-puissante cherchait à nous contraindre au silence, chaque parole devenait précieuse comme une déclaration de principe (...)[34]

In this sense, overcoming the temptation of silence was clearly, as Tortel states, the

poets' first act of resistance.

Emmanuel's poem, 'Les dents serrées' is a good example of this and various other points raised in this section. First published clandestinely,[35] it expresses both the themes of silence and *la fausse parole*, and approaches the question of silence as resistance to the corruption of language. The following commentary serves also as a useful introduction to the next part of the chapter, which examines the type of language used by Resistance poets to counter *la fausse parole.*

LES DENTS SERREES

Je hais. Ne me demandez pas ce que je hais.
Il y a des mondes de mutisme entre les hommes
et le ciel veule sur l'abîme, et le mépris
des morts. Il y a les mots entrechoqués, les lèvres
sans visage, se parjurant dans les ténèbres:
il y a l'air prostitué au mensonge, et la Voix
souillant jusqu'au secret de l'âme

Mais il y a
le feu sans bords, la soif rageuse d'être libres
il y a des millions de sourds les dents serrées
il y a le sang qui commence à peine à couler
il y a la haine et c'est assez pour espérer. (*LGP* 108)

The poem opens with a simple, terse statement of hatred followed by the request: 'Ne me demandez pas ce que je hais'. This request has various implications. It suggests first of all that the poet is either unwilling or unable to name the object of his hatred: perhaps because it is unexpressibly hateful, perhaps because he is forbidden to name it, or perhaps because the only utterance available is the treacherous and injurious language described in lines 4-7. In any case, the request seems to exemplify or result from what Emmanuel then goes on to refer to as 'des mondes de mutisme entre les hommes': if muteness is the order of the day, then the poet too may well be bound to silence. His request certainly suggests an intention not to communicate; it promises a barricade of silence between Emmanuel and his reader or listener.

Two distinct categories of silence are referred to in the poem. The first is the muteness described in line 2. This line immediately suggests that there is something not quite right between people. Muteness itself is signalled as the cause of this friction

at the same time as it is shown to be the symptom of a division between people. It separates people from each other and also, perhaps, from God (le ciel). Muteness is associated with 'le ciel veule sur l'abîme': an image which evokes a stiflingly claustrophic atmosphere. So this type of silence is not only divisive but oppressive: simultaneously the result of oppression and the cause of an oppressive atmosphere. 'Mutisme' is also connected through syntax and sound with 'le mépris des morts'. By imitating their silence, this muteness between people elicits or provokes their rancour.

Emmanuel goes on to portray in lines 4-7 what I have referred to as *la fausse parole*. The type of utterance referred to here is grating and perfidious, as divisive and alienating as the muteness just described: 'Il y a les mots entrechoqués, les lèvres / sans visage, se parjurant dans les ténèbres'. The cloak-and-dagger atmosphere evoked here perfectly describes the secretive and malicious whisperings of informers. Such perjuries, Emmanuel suggests, contaminate the air; they issue from a corrosive, blasphemous voice which tarnishes the very soul of man. This corrupt and corrupting language is set side by side with 'mutisme'. The two seem to complement each other. They both contribute to an atmosphere of oppression, they both suggest and create a division between people and they are both clearly objects of Emmanuel's contempt and despair.

If 'mutisme' is the counterpart and accomplice of a treacherous language then the type of silence referred to in line 9 is the antithesis of both. Emmanuel makes a clear distinction between the lines that have just been discussed and the descriptions that follow. This distinction is brought sharply to our attention by the typographical break in line 7 (emphasised all the more by the lack of punctuation after 'l'âme') and by the fact that this second part of the poem opens with the word 'mais', which presupposes counteraction.

The type of silence connoted by 'les dents serrées' in line 9 is in every way different from the 'mutisme' described previously. This difference is all the more marked because we might expect a reference to muteness to follow the reference to the deafness of the alleged millions. Instead, Emmanuel refers to their clenched teeth, which implies anger and deliberate restraint as against the passiveness of 'mutisme'.

These 'millions de sourds les dents serrées' are deaf to the calumnies of informers, and are grimly determined not to speak in such a treacherous manner themselves. Their silence is clearly a silence of refusal, not of passive complicity. The 'mutisme' of line 2 was presented as the cause and result of a divison between people, and as a figure of oppression. In line 9 on the other hand, millions of people are defined collectively and thereby bound together by their deafness and by their clenched teeth. Their refusal to hear and to speak with a corrupt voice is the foundation of their solidarity. Their silence is, moreover, unusually communicative. Complementing and expressing a thirst for freedom, this can be seen as the 'eloquent' silence that accompanies armed Resistance; it gives rise to 'le sang qui commence à peine à couler'. So these millions refuse oppression (including that of a vicious language) not only by a resolute silence, but also, perhaps, by their actions.

Emmanuel commends this forceful, active silence as an antithesis to infected speech. The image of 'les dents serrées' mirrors Emmanuel's own particular use of language, which is similarly angry, antithetic, and counteractive. The determined and fraternal silence that is evoked here as a metaphor of refusal is metaphorical also of the language of the poem. As does this silence, Emmanuel's expression embodies an angry resistance to oppression - the most salient feature of which is an oppressive language - and creates a bond of solidarity between people.

To return first of all to the opening line of the poem. In as condensed (or 'serrée') a manner as possible, Emmanuel expresses his hatred. He then requests that we refrain from asking him what it is that he hates. An important implication of this demand which had not yet been discussed is that it assumes a complicity between the poet and his audience: there is no need for the poet to say what he hates, for his listeners already know. (The fact that the poem was first published clandestinely means that Emmanuel's immediate audience would indeed have understood instantly that the object of his hatred was Nazism in one form or another.) In other words, this opening request suggests that there is between the poet and his public an understanding so absolute as to make explanation unnecessary. This by no means contradicts the interpretation of the line given at the beginning of this commentary.

For what is understood between Emmanuel and his audience is precisely that fact that during the Occupation certain things cannot be said; that worlds of muteness divide people who are forced to swallow their anger by the threat of being denounced.

The sense of community that is inspired immediately by this opening line contrasts with the division that is said to be caused by muteness and *la fausse parole.* The idea of community is reinforced throughout the poem. Emmanuel fashions his words into a defiant rallying cry, addressed to those millions who would presumably give him audience for the same reason that they turn a deaf ear to the vicious utterance described above. He shares their common thirst for freedom and offers them vociferously his own hatred as sufficient reason to hope. Most significantly, he complements their refusal of a debased language with the language he speaks to them and on their behalf.

In antithesis to muteness (but maintaining the anger connoted by 'les dents serrées') and in contrast to the horrible secrecy of 'des lèvres / sans visage, se parjurant dans les ténèbres', the poet proclaims loudly and emphatically the objects both of his hatred and of his admiration. Published clandestinely, the poem itself is a 'feu sans bords' which celebrates the kind of freedom of expression that was painfully uncommon at the time. The fact that Emmanuel suggests at first that he cannot name what he then goes on to name in no uncertain manner emphasises all the more the exhilarating freedom of speech embodied in the poem, for it measures that freedom against the constraints on open expression which the poet has had to overcome.

There is nothing muted or stealthy about Emmanuel's utterance here. The poem reads like an oration. It demands to be voiced out loud; to be shouted from a rooftop to the millions who will listen and rise to its increasingly insistent beat. This rhythm is largely dictated by the repetition of 'il y a'. It is fitting that the words that determine the rousing rhythmical beat of the poem should be the ones that introduce and call attention to what the poet hates and admires, for these words (and the phrases that they introduce) are in themselves a token of defiance. The tempo of the poem speeds up as the lines become more sparsely punctuated, and the rhythm becomes more marked as the distance closes between these repeated words. The phrase 'il y a' then recurs

systematically at the beginning of each of the last three lines of the poem. These lines acquire an additional beat through the end-rhymes, which are more pronounced because of the general scarcity of rhyme in the poem. The tempo of the poem also speeds up noticeably here. These final lines are unpunctuated and broken by far fewer pauses, which means that they are delivered more quickly than the others. With the now insistent rhythm and this increased tempo, the lines seem to resonate like a drum beat or a quickened heartbeat. The effect of this formal echo of the poet's own powerful emotion is to send the blood coursing through the veins of the listeners: to bring about, in other words, the flow of blood referred to in line 10. It is no coincidence that the pulse of the poem is most insistent in lines which refer directly to freedom, resistance, the flowing or the shedding of blood, and hope. These words are all affirmations of life. They are presented in a manner which gives rise to a physical sensation of surging hope, for the readers' or listeners' awareness of life is stimulated by the quickening of their own pulses that results from the sense and the pulsating beat of the words.

Emmanuel's language exemplifies in another way a marvellous freedom of expression and an antithesis of the treacherous, discordant speech of informers. The jarring nature of their 'mots entrechoqués' contrasts with the harmonious quality of Emmanuel's own use of language. By 'harmony' here I mean the compelling blend of the sounds and meanings of the words as used by the poet, which bears witness to his skilful control of language. There is an obvious and defiant irony in the fact that Emmanuel's verbal dexterity is at its most apparent where he describes both muteness and pernicious speech.

If we look again at Emmanuel's evocative reference to the vicious language of the Collaboration in lines 4-7:

> (...) Il y a les mots entrechoqués, les lèvres
> sans visage, se parjurant dans les ténèbres:
> il y a l'air prostitué au mensonge, et la Voix
> souillant jusqu'au secret de l'âme (...)

Here, Emmanuel uses the sounds of the words to match and reinforce the inference of the lines. There is the simple use of onomatopoeia in 'mots entrechoqués' which

reproduces the discord that is said to result from the Collaborator's words. There is the half-rhyme of 'lèvres' / 'ténèbres' which reinforces the idea that these lips are instruments of darkness, and which also plays upon and thus revives the connotation of perfidious utterance in the adjective 'ténébreux'. Finally, a chain of sibilants echoes the stealthy whisperings of informers. Again in conjunction with the sense of these lines, this chain of sound suggests contagion.

Imagery and prosody are used here to equally good effect. An atmosphere of treachery is created through the reference to darkness and through the suitably grotesque image of 'des lèvres / sans visage', which suggests someone furtively mouthing denunciations, perhaps covering the rest of their face through fear of being identified. All we see are the lips outlined against the darkness. The images suggest a sense of disarticulation which parallels the idea of discord, and both these ideas are emphasised and drawn to our attention through form. The words that jar are separated from the lips that utter them, themselves isolated from the face to which they belong. This separation of 'lèvres' from 'visage' is obviously accentuated by the fact that they are on separate lines: they are disarticulated by the form of the poem. The punctuation adds to the sense of disconnection. This is particularly clear in line 5, where there is strictly no need for a comma between 'visage' and 'se parjurant'; its presence marks a gap or separation between the words and lengthens a pause after 'visage' that is already dictated by the mute 'e'.

Emmanuel's reference to muteness is no less a measure of his skilful control of language:

> Il y a des mondes de mutisme entre les hommes
> et le ciel veule sur l'abîme, et le mépris
> des morts. (...)

Thematically, 'mutisme' is the keyword in this second line of the poem and indeed in this entire phrase. The word is emphasised formally by the fact that it is given a primary stress in the line, and attention to it is further excited by the obvious alliteration in [m], which reinforces the semantic connections made between muteness, man, 'l'abîme' and 'le mépris des morts'. It is indicative of Emmanuel's resistance to muteness that he should use the full range of his linguistic powers not only to draw

attention thus to the word 'mutisme', but also to reproduce an effect of muteness in the very voicing of these lines, and in the voicing of 'mutisme' itself. The alliteration, a feature of a rhetorical and self-conscious use of language, actually accomplishes muteness here, for in order to produce the phoneme [m] it is necessary to close the lips and to set the mouth briefly in mimicry of silence. The syllabification of line 2 causes another reproduction of muteness. A primary stress falls on the [i] of 'mutisme', which is lengthened by virtue of this stress. The end of the word, [sm], passes into the beginning of the next breath group. With the liaison that follows between [sm] and 'entre', the effect in reading this line is that the end of the word 'mutisme' is hardly voiced at all. It is swallowed up or muffled by the stress on the long vowel [i] and the subsequent liaison with 'entre'. Again, this is a representation of muteness, effected paradoxically by a sophisticated use of language.

This poem, whose central themes are *la fausse parole* and silence, demonstrates a use of language that counteracts both. As we shall see in the following section, it exemplifies very precisely the type of utterance which Resistance poets commonly voiced and recommended in order to 'purify' the language infected by the Occupation.

Having noted the problems of the deformation of language and of the temptation to silence, as they are highlighted in the poetry, let us now look at Resistance poetry as a combative, life-giving language of resistance.

III A LANGUAGE OF RESISTANCE

> 'Un poète est toujours occupé par l'ennemi et résiste. Cette résistance clandestine est la base de son travail. La Résistance de 1944 (*sic*) n'a été qu'une image visible de cette perpétuelle entreprise. (...) Tout poète résiste. Tout poète est clandestin.'
>
> (Jean Cocteau)[36]

> 'Je n'écrirai pas de poème d'acquiescement.' (Char; *FM* 114)

Resistance poetry is by definition a poetry that refuses the 'legitimate' order established in France by the Vichy government and by the Nazi Occupation. It is a poetry of opposition which opposes as much as anything else the linguistic order

established in France at the time. By opposing what was then the current linguistic status quo, Resistance poets continued the tradition of revolt against a common or conventional language that characterises modern French poetry in general.

In *Le Cavalier de coupe*, Marcenac defines poetry thus:

> La poésie comme une énigme toujours résolue A résoudre
> La poésie comme une époque incontredite
> Une ère de contradiction (p. 17)

In an interview with Charles Haroche in 1979, Marcenac would reiterate the idea of poetry being at once a refusal and an affirmation, a revolt against order and a new order in itself:

> J'ai souvent défini (...) la poésie comme un refus. Le poète, c'est à coup sûr, celui qui dit non. Mais on ne dit non que dans l'espoir de pouvoir un jour dire oui. Une affirmation sur fond de négation, si tu veux. (...) mon oeuvre (...) n'a jamais envisagé que *l'ordre*. L'ordre à créer, évidemment,contre l'ancien monde. (p. 44)

This idea of a dialectic of contradiction and affirmation can usefully be applied to the question of language in Resistance poetry. For this poetry exemplifies at the same time a language of refusal,written in contradiction of *la fausse parole*, and a language of affirmation: 'une époque incontredite'. It resists the current linguistic status quo by dint of creating an alternative linguistic order. This new order is in itself founded in opposition to what was then perceived as a common corruption of language during the Occupation.

In an article written in 1943, Camus states the need to create a new French dictionary in order to combat the insufficiencies of the current language:

> Les lexiques qu'on nous propose ne peuvent nous convenir. Et il est naturel que les meilleurs parmi nos esprits forment une sorte d'académie passionnée à la recherche d'un dictionnaire français. C'est pourquoi les oeuvres les plus significatives de ces années quarante ne sont peut-être pas celles qu'on imagine, mais celles qui remettent en question le langage et l'expression.[37]

Cayrol refers less guardedly to the same thing when he writes after the Liberation that 'il fallait reprendre à l'ennemi, mot après mot, le langage humain compromis de jour en jour; il fallait arracher le bâillon sur nos bouches'.[38] Joseph Rovan's 'Art poétique 40', which describes France being invaded by a treacherous, impure

language, stresses that new words (a different type of language) must be coined in opposition to this:

> Oh foules sacrifiées aux mots les plus impurs
> le temps des trahisons et du silence est mûr,
> (...)
> le coeur de nos cités s'est obscurci:
> donnons des noms nouveaux aux villes de la vie.
> (...)
> Nous sommes mûrs enfin pour notre temps suprême
> pour dire les mots de tout commencement.[39]

In contrast to the death-dealing nature of *la fausse parole*, the language of Resistance poetry was consciously life-affirming. This new 'dictionary' comprises, as Eluard puts it, 'des mots qui font vivre' (*OC* I 1262) and 'des paroles / Qui font le beau temps dans mes yeux' (*OC* I 1017). Masson refers similarly to 'mots qui chantent la chaleur' (*PI* 36). In 'Poème des camarades' he writes: 'Je veux inventer une respiration avec de l'argile tendre et les poumons de fougère - je prends toute vie à mon compte'; his words, he claims, are fertile and life-giving: 'Je parle avec le naphte et la semence' (*DM* 42). Elsa asks that Aragon's poetry 'donne une raison de vivre' ('Ce que dit Elsa'; *YE* 104). Marcenac writes:

> Nos soldats sont ceux des hommes
> Ils disent vie bonheur tendresse
> dans toutes les langues du monde (*CF* 51)

There are various ways in which the language of Resistance poetry manifested itself as a singing, life-giving language, antithetic to *la fausse parole*. While the words of Occupiers and Collaborators were instrumental in sending people to their deaths and then violating their memory, the poets revived the dead by virtue of giving them voice. This resurrection of the dead effected at the same time a revitalisation of language. This is particularly clear in a group of poems written to commemorate the execution of Gabriel Péri, where there is a clear attempt to 'immortalise' Péri by making his name an entry in the dictionary. These accounts of the dead in the poetry are also life-giving in their truthfulness. Against the calumnies voiced in the collaborationist press, the poets attempted to set records straight and to ensure that the events of the Resistance would be remembered in the future according to their words and not those of the Collaboration. This exemplifies the poets' general concern with purifying the

treacherous, uncertain language of the Occupation through the truthfulness of their own. Finally, the language of Resistance poetry is life-giving, and counteractive of the discordant, divisive nature of *la fausse parole* in so far as it embodies and celebrates an ideal of *fraternité*.

These various and related features of the poets' language of resistance are outlined below.

1. THE THEME OF RESURRECTION : LANGUAGE AND HISTORY

The rebirth of the dead is one of the pivotal themes of Resistance poetry. It has already been illustrated in passing in Chapters II and III, with reference to poems written to commemorate the deaths of the Châteaubriant hostages and of Gabriel Péri. Using mainly the same poems, all of which can be found in the appendix, I shall concentrate more specifically here on the idea that this resurrection of the dead is effected in language. An excellent example of words being used by the poets as an affirmation of life, in contrast to *la fausse parole*, the theme of the dead being reborn in language is also fundamental to an understanding of the related notions of history and of man becoming, examined in Chapters II and III respectively. These complementary themes are themselves indissociable from the poets' attempt to affirm a certain historical truth in their work. In so doing, they challenged the 'truthfulness' of statements made in the official, collaborationist press about the hostages and Péri, conspicuously combating these examples of *la fausse parole*. The important question of truth in the language of Resistance poetry is dealt with in the section which follows this one.

The reaction in the collaborationist press to these two particular episodes is illustrated by the following, representative examples. This response can be taken to constitute the official truth that was established and promoted at the time about the hostages and Péri.

The Châteaubriant executions were recorded thus on the front page of *Paris-Soir* (23 octobre 1941):

> Tous les vrais Français, sans exception, réprouveront formellement cet acte insensé dont la victime (...) était un homme juste, bon, accueillant, qui avait toujours fait preuve de la plus intelligente compréhension et qui entretenait avec les autorités françaises les meilleurs rapports.
>
> Mais la réprobation d'un tel crime ne suffit pas. Il faut que les coupables soient impitoyablement châtiés.
>
> Agents de la propagande communiste et gaulliste, ces lâches meurtriers savent que des sanctions suivent inévitablement leur geste odieux. Ils font ainsi sciemment supporter par d'autres la responsabilité de leur forfait. Certes, les otages fusillés sont choisis parmi les responsables de la campagne étrangère qui a pour but de semer le trouble dans nos esprits. Ces otages sont les auteurs spirituels de ces abominables attentats. (...)
>
> Nos compatriotes doivent comprendre que leur devoir est de dénoncer les assassins et de conserver, selon le mot d'ordre du Chef de l'Etat, l'unité de la Patrie dans l'ordre et la dignité.

Pétain himself put forward much the same view of the executions in a widely published appeal to the French people. This is reproduced here *in extenso*:

> UN APPEL DU MARECHAL PETAIN
>
> Français,
> Contre des officers allemands de l'armée d'occupation,
> des coups de feu ont été tirés. Deux morts ...
> Cinquante Français ont, ce matin, payé de leur vie ces
> crimes sans nom.
> Cinquante seront fusillés demain si les coupables ne
> sont pas découverts.
> Un ruisseau de sang coule à nouveau sur la France.
> La rançon est affreuse. Elle n'atteint pas directement
> les vrais coupables.
> Français, votre devoir est clair: il faut cesser la
> tuerie.
> Par l'armistice nous avons déposé les armes. Nous n'avons
> pas le droit de les reprendre pour frapper les Allemands
> dans le dos.
> L'étranger qui ordonne ces crimes sait bien qu'il meurtrit
> la France en pleine chair. Peu lui importe nos veuves,
> nos orphelins, nos prisonniers. Dressez-vous contre ce
> complot. Aidez la justice. Un coupable retrouvé et
> cent Français sont épargnés.
> Je vous jette ce cri d'une voix brisée. Ne laissez plus
> faire de mal à la France.[40]

The execution of Gabriel Péri, a less conspicuous event, elicited far less comment in the press. The official attitude towards Péri after his death can be seen, however, in the following remarks made by Jean Theroigne in an article entitled 'Nous clouons au pilori Gabriel Péri'.[41] Péri, like the Châteaubriant hostages, is branded an enemy of

the French people and a traitor to the French *patrie*. Theroigne writes that during the Spanish Civil War, 'Gabriel Péri, en tant que rédacteur en chef de *l'Humanité*, fut le responsable de la mort de nombreux ouvriers français partis combattre dans les rangs des brigades internationales'. After citing some allegedly unpatriotic remarks made by Péri after the Armistice, such as 'L'indépendance de la France ne doit pas être sacrifiée', Theroigne concludes that 'Gabriel Péri, pour satisfaire ses maîtres russes, ne reculait devant aucune exagération et tout lui était bon pour soutenir les thèses les plus antifrançaises'.

Authoritative writings such as these were thought, by the poets at least, to implant in people's minds a false image of the hostages and of Péri. Their air of authority gave them the semblance of truth, and yet language was being used here to conceal what the poets felt instinctively to be the truth behind these events.

It is interesting in this respect that the executions are sometimes associated in the poetry with linguistic betrayal. In 'Otages fusillés à Châteaubriant', Masson refers to Pilate going back on his word, and Seghers makes reference to 'la fausse parole' in 'Octobre'. More conclusively, when Emmanuel's 'Otages' was first published in the Swiss review, *Traits*, it included the epigraph, 'La rançon est atroce' : a paraphrase of the appeal made by Pétain after the executions. This appeal is a good example of the type of linguistic response to the event which Emmanuel condemns within the poem itself, where he denounces 'Ceux qui se sont levés pour arguer et prétendre', and claims that 'même les moins pieux les auront condamnés'. 'Arguer' and 'prétendre' are verbs of ratiocination or inference : they imply discussing the executions instead of immediately and unconditionally rejecting them. This, in effect, is what Pétain does. He claims to represent France and to know what is best for his compatriots, and he argues that as a consequence of the executions, the duty of the French people is clear. His own interpretation of that duty is clearly different from that of Emmanuel. This is marked by the very fact that he dismisses the hostages' deaths, using them only as a step in his overall argument.

Apart from being dismissed and apparently misrepresented in the writings of Collaborators, the hostages and Péri were condemned to an official silence. This, at

least, is how certain poets present it. In 'Otages', Emmanuel refers to the hostages as 'ces morts sans mémoire' : without official recognition or testament. He contends that the muteness of those who refused to speak out about the executions - of 'ceux qui se sont tus de crainte de s'entendre' - is just as unpardonable as the words of those who spoke only to 'arguer et prétendre'. In Aragon's 'Légende de Gabriel Péri', Péri's death is associated with anonymity:

> C'est au cimetière d'Ivry
> Qu'au fond de la fosse commune
> Dans l'anonyme nuit sans lune
> Repose Gabriel Péri

The poem reveals that the Occupiers tried to remove all traces of Péri and to shroud the subject of his death in silence. Having buried Péri in a communal grave without a headstone, the Occupiers, we are told, then took extreme measures to prevent his death being commemorated (lines 9-20). (It should be remembered, of course, that this was all part of Aragon's attempt to construct a legend about Péri.) In 'Gabriel Péri', Eluard presents Péri's continuing battle against death as a battle against being erased from people's memories. Death and forgetting are presented as equivalent notions: 'Un homme est mort qui continue la lutte / contre la mort contre l'oubli'.

In opposition to the truth put out by the authorities about the hostages and about Péri, and to counteract the silence into which these episodes might then, perhaps, have been cast, the poets made a deliberate and conspicuous attempt to affirm their own version of historical truth. Their poems are life-affirming in so far as they attempt to ensure that the Châteaubriant hostages and Péri are resurrected and survive in language. The poems themselves can be seen as authoritative statements likely to implant, in the minds and memories of those who read them, the events that they are talking about.

It is interesting then that just as the deaths of the hostages and Péri are sometimes associated in the poems with silence and *la fausse parole*, so their survival is sometimes explicitly connected with language of another kind. In 'Octobre', for instance, the theme of the hostages' rebirth is first introduced when Seghers refers to them as 'enfants criblés qui toujours chantent'. This apparent paradox, emphasised by

the inversion of verb and adverb, immediately links the hostages' lingering presence with the notion of song. Death and song are also set in conflict in Aragon's 'Ballade ...'. The final stanzas of the poem describe Péri defiantly singing the Marseillaise and the Internationale in the face of his executioners. The phrase that Aragon chooses to quote from the Marseillaise corroborates the idea of song counteracting death. The words 'sanglant est levé' act as an image of Péri's own situation, and convey an impression of his rising from death through song.

Emmanuel's 'Mémoire de Péri' is a particularly clear example of a connection being made between Péri's survival and language. The poem is informed by a thematic contrast between death and utterance, which presupposes the idea that the type of language referred to and used by the poet here is an affirmation of life. The notions of death, fear and darkness are grouped together in a connotative cluster which is contrasted with a more dominant cluster of language, song, love, light and hope. Emmanuel refers to Péri as 'l'homme qui sut dresser ce chant contre la peur' and as 'l'homme qui te sourit ô Mort aux lèvres douces / et peupla ton néant d'amour et de chansons'. Péri's courageousness in the face of death is given particular emphasis: 'Il eut devant la Mort la suprême élégance / de tendre son visage au soleil'. These lines imply an almost consciously aesthetic quality in the manner in which Péri died: it is as if Péri himself deliberately engineered the images that posterity would have of his death. This element of artifice gives Péri's gesture some of the qualities of a linguistic act, and indeed, the following line describes the gesture as a cry, reminiscent of that of Christ from the cross: 'Ce seul geste creusa d'un tel cri la distance / que le seuil noir s'ouvrit sur d'immenses réveils'. The same thematic contrast between death and expression is evident in Emmanuel's description of Péri as 'L'Homme qui sut mourir en écoutant les sources / jaillir de son corps las rendu au sol profond'. The connotation of new life in 'sources' contrasts with the idea of Péri's death that dominates these lines, and the verb 'écouter' again associates this paradoxical new life with language. As well as being made thematically, this suggestion that language is a life-force is made through form - through, that is, a conspicuous manipulation of language. One brief example of this is that the second stanza from which these last

lines are drawn is dominated by two chains of sound, [u] and [i], which both originate in the word 'mourir':

mourir → écoutant → sources → sourit → douces → amour
↓
jaillir
↓
sourit

The notion of death is far outweighed by the 'life-giving' connotations of the other words in these two sound-chains; we have here exemplified very conspicuously the idea of death being overcome by a particular use of language.

The thematic contrast made in the examples above between death and language underlines the poets' attempt to ensure that the hostages and Péri survive in language, in a manner contrary to the wishes of the authorities. This was a deliberate effort on the part of each poet, and visibly so, as illustrated by the following lines from Emmanuel's 'Otages':

> nous ne pleurerons pas sur ces croix renversées.
>
> Mais nous nous souviendrons de ces morts sans mémoire
> nous compterons nos morts comme on les a comptés.
> (...)
> Nous ne laisserons pas en friche leur image
> les vergers refleuriront sur les prés reverdis

These poets were content neither to let the image of the dead lie fallow nor, as this implies, to let history run its course. Instead, they determined to voice the dead or to cultivate their image. They determined to resurrect the Châteaubriant hostages and Péri by making them part of the history that would be remembered and talked about in the future.

There are two parts to this process of resurrecting the dead and ensuring that they survive in language and history. First, the hostages and Péri are presented as figures who are talked about not only by the poets, but by all members of a community. This is closely allied to the phenomenon of legend. History, as Aragon argues in 'De l'exactitude historique en poésie', is a series of such legends (see p. 118 , above); it

builds legends, however, more or less by accident. In making a determined effort to build the legends of Châteaubriant and Péri, the poets were attempting to direct the course of history. Second, and by extension, the poets were attempting to control the manner in which Châteaubriant and Péri are talked about: to ensure, for instance, that they are not remembered as legendary traitors. Péri, as Emmanuel says, must be a 'souvenir sans ombre'. The concern with controlling the significance that these events would have, universally, is exemplified particularly well by Eluard's 'Gabriel Péri'. This poem is an attempt to transform the name Péri into a noun with conventional meaning: a distilled legend, or a proverbial myth. These means of entering Châteaubriant and Péri into history are outlined below.

(a) Creating history through legend and proverbial myth

The desire for these episodes to become an established part of history is reflected in the frequent references in the poems to the hostages and Péri being talked about in the future. In 'Octobre', the rebirth of the Châteaubriant hostages is foregrounded when Seghers states that their names will be recited by schoolchildren:

> Ils ressusciteront vêtus de feu dans nos écoles,
> Arrachés aux bras de leurs enfants ils entendront
> Avec la guerre, l'exil et la fausse parole
> D'autres enfants dire leurs noms

To predict in 1941 that the Châteaubriant hostages would be talked about as heroes in a school history lesson is at the same time a measure of Seghers's desire to see this realised, and an important part of its realisation. In anticipating this validation of his own account of the hostages, Seghers inspires confidence, and gives an air of authority to his own words. He helps effect, in other words, the building of a legend.

The same can be said of Masson's 'Tombeau de Gabriel Péri'. Here, Masson's intention to make Péri into a legend is realised by his confident assertion that an entire community will respond to Péri as a legendary, saint-like figure:

> Nous serons tes enfants que chaque printemps ramènera
> sous des charges de miel oindre de printemps nouveau
> tes bras
> Nos femmes sur les routes tresseront en voiles de veuve
> la poussière

Nos enfants te parleront tranquilles à travers ta châsse
de pierre
comme à un grand saint étendu qui les regarde.

The same confidence in Péri's memory being perpetuated is conveyed by the fraternal vows made by Scheler to Péri/Politzer in the closing lines of 'In memoriam G.P.', and also in Emmanuel's 'Mémoire de Péri', which clearly reveals the poet's aim to have Péri accepted and talked about as an established legend:

Vous qui l'avez aimé ce mort vous soit un temple
dont les hymnes futurs emplissent le vaisseau

An important feature of Péri as a legendary figure in certain of these poems is that his own words are presented as legendary words which echo in people's consciousness. In enabling Péri to speak from beyond the grave (cf. Aragon's 'Légende de Gabriel Péri': 'Dans le cimetière d'Ivry / Il chante encore il chante encore'), the poets simultaneously revive Péri and highlight that his resurrection is a function of language.[42]

The opening lines of Emmanuel's 'Mémoire de Péri' refer to a letter written by Péri on the eve of his execution:

Je ne sais rien de lui que sa dernière lettre
qui finit sur l'écho des lendemains chanteurs

The version of Péri's letter to which the poets would then have had access is that recorded clandestinely by Aragon, under the pseudonym of Le Témoin des Martyrs, in *Le Crime contre l'esprit*:

> Que mes amis sachent que je suis resté fidèle à l'idéal de ma vie; que mes compatriotes sachent que je vais mourir pour que vive la France. Je fais une dernière fois mon examen de conscience. Il est positif. Je crois toujours, cette nuit, que mon cher Paul Vaillant -Couturier avait raison de dire que "le communisme est la jeunesse du monde" et "qu'il prépare des lendemains qui chantent". Je me sens très fort pour affronter la mort. Adieu! et que vive la France. (p. 58)[43]

By echoing Péri's words in his poem (as Aragon does throughout 'Ballade ...' and as Eluard does in line 5 of 'Epitaphe (ii)'), and by then referring to them as 'mots éternels', Emmanuel plays a deliberate part in eternalising them, and in affirming through them the legendary status of Péri.

The attempt to make Péri's final words resonate as legendary words is particularly clear in Aragon's 'Ballade ...'. The words which Aragon unaccountably left out when he reproduced Péri's letter in *Le Crime contre l'esprit* (see note 43), are paraphrased in the refrain of his poem:

> Et si c'était à refaire
> Je referais ce chemin

Aragon's steady and relentless repetition of these words has two effects. First, it signals to the reader that the words are highly charged and significant. It draws attention to them as legendary words, achieving the same effect as Emmanuel's reference to 'mots éternels'. Second, it implants the words firmly in the reader's memory. By enabling and encouraging the reader to reproduce them, it effects their transformation into legendary words. The deliberate nature of this attempt to immortalise Péri and his words is further highlighted in the poem by Aragon's allusions to the immortal words of Henry IV and Richard III:

> J'ai dit tout ce qu'on peut dire
> L'exemple du Roi Henri
> Un cheval pour mon empire
> Une messe pour Paris

The intention is clearly for Péri to go down in history by dint of his words being remembered and repeated with the same ease as we remember, repeat and even misquote 'my kingdom for a horse' or 'Paris vaut bien une messe'.

Aragon's 'Légende de Gabriel Péri' is, as the title proclaims, a conscious attempt to construct and help promulgate a legend about Péri. Again, Péri is signalled as an important, legendary figure by the fact that the poet responds to him as such, and claims that this response is general. Just as Masson compares the victims of both executions with Christ, and predicts that children will talk to Péri 'comme à un grand saint', so Aragon refers to Péri as 'le martyr dans sa tombe' and describes his burial place as a holy ground to which pilgrims come laden with flowers. According to the poem, the Occupiers, too, respond to the still potent memory of Péri. We are told that to erase Péri from people's minds, they buried him in an unmarked, communal grave and denied access to the graveside:

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Ils croyaient sous d'autres victimes
Le crime conjurant le crime
Etouffer Gabriel Péri

Le bourreau se sent malhabile
Devant une tache de sang
Pour en écarter les passants
Ils ont mis des gardes-mobiles

This alleged precaution taken by the Occupiers, coupled with the alleged response of his mourners, is a measure of the legendary importance that Aragon is claiming and creating for Péri.

One of the most significant features of this poem, in respect of creating a legend, and something which distinguishes it from 'Ballade ...', is Aragon's conspicuous naming of Gabriel Péri. We have already seen how Péri's death is associated with anonymity in the poem. Aragon also refers directly to this silence being broken:

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Quoi qu'on fasse et quoi qu'on efface
Le vent qui passe aux gens qui passent
Dit un nom Gabriel Péri

The wind that carries the name of Péri can be seen here as a metaphor for the all-pervasive language of clandestine Resistance writing.[44] Like the wind, this language has no restrictions on its movement; it manages to reach people despite its illegality. The poem itself is an example of clandestine writing, which also exemplifies a contravention of the silence to which Péri had been condemned. Its emphatic repetition of Péri's name blatantly defies the deathly anonymity proposed for Péri by those responsible for his execution. The name 'Gabriel Péri' is voiced in full, with each syllable counted in the structure of the octosyllabic line. Péri is also a rhyming word in the poem, whose solid pattern of rhymes and rhythms creates the impression that within each stanza, every word is properly in its place and therefore irreplaceable. In other words, the reader has the impression that the name 'Gabriel Péri' could not be substituted by any other name or word: the rhythmic pattern of the poem demands that it be uttered. The act of naming Péri is further stressed by the reader being made aware of having to wait for the name to be voiced. This is particularly effective in the first stanza.. Péri is the grammatical subject here, but the use of syntactic inversion

forces the reader to wait until the final line to discover his identity. This touch of suspense adds weight to the name itself when it is finally voiced. The voicing of Péri's name, emphasised by Aragon's manipulation of language within the poem, conspicuously overrides the anonymity associated with his death. It affirms Péri's survival in suggesting strongly that Péri's name has widespread significance: it is a name which means something to all the 'gens qui passent'.

It was important that the names Gabriel Péri and Châteaubriant should enter history through legend, and mean something to people in the future. It was also essential for the poets that these names and episodes should signify something entirely unequivocal. The poems exemplify a determined effort to control the manner in which the hostages and Péri would be talked about: to invest them with a meaning that people would accept as being the only right one. The authority of the poets' statements directly challenges the authority of statements made in the collaborationist press, which vilified the hostages and Péri, and presented their names as synonyms of treachery.

In establishing their own truth of the hostages and Péri, certain poets took care to affirm their subjects' patriotism and to have their names signify, for one thing, allegiance to France. In 'Octobre', Seghers presents the Châteaubriant hostages unequivocally as national heroes. He associates them with Eustache de Saint-Pierre and Joan of Arc, refers to 'notre Loire sanglante' and writes that 'Bordeaux pleure, et la France est droite dans son deuil'. Bérimont and Emmanuel contribute to this same image of the hostages when they describe the Châteaubriant dead feeding the soil of France. The *topos* of 'la terre et les morts' is, as I argued in Chapter II, an established symbol of French patriotism. Presenting the Châteaubriant hostages as the new *morts terriens* clearly affirms their loyalty to the French *patrie*. Aragon leaves no doubt in the reader's mind about the patriotism of Gabriel Peri. His 'Légende de Gabriel Péri' ends with a declaration that 'Il bat encore pour la France / Le coeur de Gabriel Péri'. The constancy of this emotional bond to France is also stressed in 'Ballade ...', where Aragon has Péri say: 'Je meurs et France demeure / Mon amour et mon refus'. His patriotism is confirmed again in the final two stanzas of this poem, where Péri is

shown to face his executioners singing the Marseillaise.

The general desire not only to ensure that Péri survives as language, but to control the import of his name, is particularly evident in Eluard's 'Gabriel Péri', as I have said. This poem is a conspicuous attempt to transform the name 'Péri' into a proverbial myth. By this I mean a name such as Judas or Dunkirk: a quasi-proverbial expression which could even figure as a dictionary-entry, as these two examples do. These proverbial myths are distinct from legends in so far as they involve a greater degree of abstraction and universality. People generally can use the names more or less correctly without knowing any details of the legends or episodes which gave them their significance. For a name to enter the language thus not only guarantees its survival, but ensures that it survives in a particular way, with a specific and enduring denotation.

At the beginning of the final section of 'Gabriel Péri', Eluard writes:

> Il y a des mots qui font vivre
> Et ce sont des mots innocents

He goes on to list such life-giving, innocent words, drawing attention to them as words by prefixing many of them with 'le mot':

> Le mot chaleur le mot confiance
> Amour justice et le mot liberté
> Le mot enfant et le mot gentillesse
> (...)

Included in the list of words, which are mainly nouns, are references to certain names of flowers, fruits, countries, villages, women and friends. These names, unlike the other words, are left unspecified: they are noticeably absent. Eluard's inclusion of 'certains noms' within this list of life-giving words has two important effects. First, it categorises such names as nouns (we are reminded here that 'nom' is both name and noun). This encourages us to recognize that it is fairly common in our private language for proper nouns to function as common nouns and to hold a particular significance. Second, the fact that Eluard refrains from giving his own examples of such names (one could easily imagine France and Nusch, for instance) enables the reader personally to realise this phenomenon of language. We instinctively substitute names that we ourselves have loaded with private significance for those that Eluard

leaves unspecified. Having elicited an awareness of certain names having specific (but private) connotations, Eluard then openly invites the reader to accept 'Péri' as one such name:

> (...)
> Le mot courage et le mot découvrir
> Et le mot frère et le mot camarade
> Et certains noms de pays de villages
> Et certains noms de femmes et d'amis
> Ajoutons-y Péri

What Eluard is conspicuously trying to effect here is Péri's entry into everyone's private vocabulary, and hence into the common language. The names that the reader may think of for 'certains noms de femmes et d'amis' remain private, as emphasised by the fact that the poet keeps to himself the names that he considers meaningful. For anyone else they are just names. The name 'Péri' on the other hand - the only name that the poet voices - is offered up to the reader, charged with the emotional significance that it has for the poet, and that he conscientiously gives it throughout the poem (see lines 1-12 and then 'Péri est mort pour ce qui nous fait vivre'). Should we, as readers, be swayed by Eluard's emotive presentation of Péri, and admit the name Péri, as asked, into our private vocabulary, then Eluard has succeeded in converting the proper noun, 'Péri', into a common noun, with a conventional meaning. It becomes a part of the common language in so far as it means the same thing to the poet and reader at least; it is a meaningful name, synonymous with, for instance, 'Le mot chaleur le mot confiance / Amour justice et le mot liberté'. This is certainly how the poet intended it to be, as witnessed by 'Epitaphe(i)', where Eluard has Péri say: 'Tu prononces mon nom et tu respires mieux'.

This is only one example of the deliberate attempt made by poets to transform certain episodes from the Resistance period into proverbial myths, and so ensure that they survive in people's minds. Another striking example is Tardieu's 'Oradour', which is analysed in detail as a conclusion to this thesis.

For a name to become a proverbial myth is a measure of its universality: its general, widespread significance. Eluard was clearly aiming for this universality in attempting to give Péri's name a conventional meaning. Other poets achieve the same

effect by leaving the episodes unspecified and the victims unnamed. Guillevic's 'Souvenir' is a hybrid example: by epigraph the poem is particular, dedicated for posterity 'A la mémoire de Gabriel Péri', yet by title it is general, and draws attention to the universal significance of Péri's death. Bérimont's 'Le temps du beau plaisir ...' makes no direct reference to the Châteaubriant hostages. At the time of publication, however, readers would presumably have understood the poem as a reference to the executions, because of its theme of the dead, coupled with its allusions to the Loire (line 1) and to the fighting on the Russian front (line 13). It is also likely that Scheler's 'In memoriam G.P.' would have been recognised as a tribute to Gabriel Péri or Georges Politzer. Yet the effect of veiling the subjects of these poems is to assert their general and lasting significance. Other examples are 'Ballade ...', where Aragon narrates Péri's story and repeats his words without ever mentioning him by name, and Seghers's 'Octobre', which was only given the epigraph, 'Aux fusillés de Châteaubriant', on its second publication in 1945. Seghers makes reference in the poem to the Loire and to Bordeaux, but never to Châteaubriant itself. The hostages themselves (as in all the poems about Châteaubriant) remain as anonymous as the children killed in 'Le Massacre des Innocents', with Seghers's failure to name them marked by his reference in line 20 to children reciting their names in the future. It is legitimate to say that the effect of all these poems, regardless of their authors' intentions, has been to contribute to the universality of the myths of the hostages and Péri.

By asserting in these various ways the universal significance of Châteaubriant and Péri, the poets ensure that those incidents are seen as being neither time-, place-, nor culture-bound. Establishing their universality is an integral part of the overall attempt to make Châteaubriant and Péri enter history.

As a coda to this section it is interesting to note that the process of bequeathing the Occupiers and Collaborators to posterity is a much simpler matter in the poetry. An obvious corollary of making sure that their heroes are remembered and talked about in a particular way is for the poets to ensure that their enemies are dismissed from the collective memory. Witness, for example, the satirical dismissals of Occupiers and

Collaborators alike in Aragon's *Le Musée Grévin*.[45] Aragon vows, for instance, that Laval will not be honoured in poetry, history or legend. He implies that this arch-collaborator will be refused by language and condemned to perpetual silence:

> Les chardons du poète et ses chambres ardentes
> Flatteraient trop, Laval, ton orgueil de valet!
> Tu ne saurais entrer au val obscur de Dante:
> Tu es trop laid, tu es trop laid, tu es trop laid!
>
> Tu crèveras, c'est tout, toi, l'homme de Montoire,
> Une vieille charogne à la fin dégrisée.
> Nul ne t'hébergera: la légende, l'histoire ...
> Chien galeux de partout et par tous refusé. (*MG* 15)

Similarly, in 'Le ciel des fusillés', Marcenac writes of the enemies losing their voice and having no part in the future. This contrasts markedly with his attempt to voice and to perpetuate the memory of the Resistance partisans to whom the poem is addressed:

> (...) le ciel gardera l'empreinte de vos plaies
> Treizième signe du Zodiaque
> La nuit chante votre mémoire et votre gloire
> crucifiées
> Eux demeurent maudits dans leur nuit sans
> pardon
> Ils n'ont plus d'avenir
> (...)
> Les astrologues ennemis
>
> Perdent la vue Perdent la voix Perdent la tête
> Leurs étoiles ne comptent plus (*CF* 34-5)

The dismissal of the opponents is often put, as it is here, in terms of language, with the poets stating simply that they will not be talked about. Tardieu condemns them to silence for their own abuse of language:

> ceux qui disaient: voici la vie, la santé, la force et la joie, alors qu'ils apportaient la mort, la torture, la honte et le mépris, ceux-là ont violé la sainteté de la parole, ils ont commis le pire crime contre l'esprit: ils seront donc châtiés par le silence.[46]

Marcenac writes: 'Ni leur vie ni leur mort ne méritent un nom' ('Voici leur tour d'être traqués', *CF* 50). In 'Epitaphe (ii)', Eluard has Péri voice his own victory over those responsible for his execution. Through Eluard, Péri continues to speak. He asserts that the enemies, on the other hand, are destined for silence:

> Nos bourreaux mourront en silence
> Nous leurs vainqueurs notre voix chante
> La joie de vivre tous ensemble

If Péri, the Châteaubriant hostages and other heroes of the Resistance are to enter history as legend and proverbial myth, then it is clearly also the intention of the poets to have the Occupiers and Collaborators silenced and erased from memory.

(b) History and the advent of man

This chapter illustrates, in part, the poets' concern with writing history: with ensuring that history is written in a particular way, and that it is their version of historical truth that is remembered and talked about. Their concern with creating history is obviously a concern for the future.[47] This point is argued in 'Poésie et défense de l'homme' (*Almanach des Lettres françaises*):

> ce n'est pas tant sur l'actuel que cette poésie peut se flatter d'agir, mais par sa nature même de forme qui dure, c'est dans l'histoire que dès aujourd'hui elle prend place, c'est à l'avenir qu'elle prétend s'adresser, aux générations qui sortiront de cette nuit qu'elle entend porter témoignage (...) (pp. 80-81)

As a deliberate address to the future, Resistance poetry involved itself directly with the process of man becoming.

In the poems written in memory of Péri, reference is often made to Péri's death helping to construct the future and to form future generations of people. Emmanuel describes Péri's death as a dedication to the future. He asks:

> Sa mort n'est-elle pas la dédicace obscure
> du grand espace clair où sa mémoire luit?

In 'Légende de Gabriel Péri', Aragon confidently asserts that 'Il y aura d'autres aurores et d'autres Gabriel Péri'; this is echoed in Scheler's description of Péri/Politzer as a 'future chrysalide', and in Eluard's 'Epigraphe (ii)', where 'Péri' says:

> J'ai chanté l'homme qui viendra
> Prendre des forces sur ma tombe

In all of these examples, Péri is presented as being somehow responsible for the advent of man: an example to be emulated, or a model of humanity that will be reaffirmed.

I would suggest here that more than Péri himself, perhaps, the poems that *commemorate* Péri exemplify and contribute to the process of man becoming.

First of all, they lay emphasis, like most Resistance poems, on the historical aspect of man forming himself. They stress that we construct our destinies and our meaningfulness by responding to the events out of which history is written. They apply what Marcenac calls the 'méthode historique' of Resistance poetry (*CF* 15), which teaches that this historical aspect is no less important a part of man becoming than, for instance, the biological one, or the aesthetic one on which poets have traditionally concentrated their attention.[48] One of the essential messages or truths left to the future by poems such as those commemorating Péri is that our personal history is determined in part by contemporary events, and by how we respond to them.

The poems also contribute to the advent of man, and help create a future humanity, by attempting to fashion the language that would be spoken in the future. There is a clear awareness of this in Masson's 'Prose de triomphe', for example, where he writes:

> Hommes de l'avenir vous marcherez sur notre poussière
> dans les mots que vous aimez amassée (*LNM* 67)

In Chapter III, examples were given of the poets' belief that we form ourselves in language. Poems such as those commemorating Péri, or the Châteaubriant hostages, or Oradour, are part of the overall attempt in Resistance poetry to cleanse the French language of *la fausse parole*. They are also conspicuous attempts to construct the myths that would become part of people's everyday vocabulary. By trying to influence the way in which people would talk about certain events, Resistance poets were attempting also to influence the way in which people would be: to build the common language in which people would form both their idea of history, and themselves.

The subject of truth has been broached several times in this chapter so far. There has been the question of poets establishing and promoting a certain 'historical truth' in their work, and the suggestion that one of the 'truths' established in the poetry is the historical aspect of man becoming. The question of language and truth is often foregrounded in Resistance poetry, its importance obviously emphasised by the

treacherous nature of *la fausse parole*. The following section examines more systematically the notion of language and truth as it is highlighted and exemplified in the poetry.

2. RESISTANCE POETRY AS A LANGUAGE OF TRUTH

> 'Il faudra peut-être longtemps pour nettoyer cette auge, pour replacer les mots dans leur vrai sens. Il faudra parler avec prudence et respect, apprendre le Littré par coeur. Puis tout redeviendra possible, et vrai, même les images.' (Tardieu)[49]

The poets' concern with what they saw as the arbitrary warping of words by those in power at the time has already been noted. In their minds, *la fausse parole* gave words a new significance, as unacceptable as it was unfamiliar. Witness the words 'patrie' and 'justice', subjected to the same undesirable doctoring as the names 'Péri' and 'Châteaubriant'. In opposition to what were seen as the lies disseminated by *la fausse parole*, Resistance poets made a concerted effort to speak truthfully: to demythify the treacherous language of the authorities and to establish their own 'truths' in language. This section illustrates the importance attached to the 'realignment' of language and truth, and highlights the features of the poets' use of language which effected it.

In the face of a perceived corruption of language, honesty became a precious quality, worthy of the poets' admiration. The honesty of others is sometimes celebrated directly.

In their poems commemorating Péri, for example, Eluard and Aragon emphasise the importance, as well as what was then the subversiveness, of truthful speech. In 'Gabriel Péri', Eluard strongly implies that Péri died for a life-giving, innocent, language:

> Il y a des mots qui font vivre
> Et ce sont des mots innocents
> (...)
> Péri est mort pour ce qui nous fait vivre

According to Aragon's version of Péri's death in 'Ballade ...', it was indeed the case that Péri died for refusing to lie. The dialogue here consists of a battle of wills and of words between Péri and his gaolers. Péri is repeatedly told that he can save his own life by renouncing his past actions and forswearing his beliefs. There is a clear emphasis in the poem on the linguistic nature of the proposed denial: Péri is told again and again that by 'saying the word', he could deliver himself from execution:

> Rien qu'un mot la porte cède
> S'ouvre et tu sors Rien qu'un mot
> Le bourreau se dépossède
> Sésame Finis tes maux

Far from giving in to his tempters' demands, Péri constantly and calmly affirms his allegiance to the values for which he was imprisoned. His declaration of faith constitutes the poem's refrain, and is repeated every third stanza. These words reflect his honesty and integrity. What he says is deliberately restricted to a reiteration of the values that he holds dear: 'J'ai dit tout ce qu'on peut dire'. Such an 'innocent' and careful use of language stands out in contrast to that of his gaolers, who display an indifference to words, and blithely asssociate language with lying, when they ask Péri to utter 'rien qu'un mot rien qu'un mensonge'.

Eluard celebrates the honesty of another Resistance hero, Lucien Legros, in 'Les armes de la douleur':

> Cet enfant aurait pu mentir
> Et se sauver
>
> La molle plaine infranchissable
> Cet enfant n'aimait pas mentir
> Il cria très fort ses forfaits
>
> Il opposa sa verité
> La vérité
> Comme une épée à ses bourreaux
> Comme une épée la loi suprême (*OC* I 1226-7)[50]

Similarly, Seghers refers to Resisters killed in the Liberation of Paris dying for the truth by which they had lived:

> Beaux enfants de pierre et de pluie
> Saints Sébastiens de la cité
> Criblés aux murs de l'autre été
> Pour vivre votre vérité ('A ceux du 25 août 1944', *FA* 43)

It is significant that the heroism of all of these Resisters is held by the poets to consist, in part, in their defence of truth. Truth, it seemed, was outlawed in France at the time, and punishable even by death. It was illegal to hold and to practise certain convictions. It was also illegal to challenge the authority of official statements, even when that authority was instinctively felt to be based on a travesty of truth.

The wish to re-establish an 'innocent' language, untainted by the lies and calumnies of Occupiers and Collaborators alike, is often referred to in the poetry. In 'Prophétie sur les nations', Emmanuel describes a joyful language, associated with the Word of God, in which 'il n'est plus place désormais pour le blasphème' (*Com* 35). In 'S'il reste encore', Marcel Thiry wishes for a language purged of *la fausse parole*, one in which he could again voice and assume his humanity:

> S'il reste une île, une langue innocente,
> (...)
> Une raison, des accents qui ne sentent
> Le chef trompeur ni l'enfant fusillé
> C'est là mon île et mon verbe, et j'en nomme
> Encore les dieux et je veux en tenter
> La chance encor d'y porter le nom d'homme[51]

This restoration of an innocent language is again described as something of fundamental importance to man in Edith Thomas's 'Terre'. Like Thiry, Edith Thomas suggests that even the word 'man' had changed significance. (There is ample evidence of this given in Chapter III.) She makes a passionate plea for a language in which

> (...) les mots auraient un sens,
> les pauvres mots perdus,
> les pauvres mots enfoncés comme des sanglots
> à coups de bottes,
> à coups de crosses,
> à coups de matraques,
> à coups de nerfs de boeuf:
> liberté, égalité, justice,
> et l'homme enfin
> l'homme sur cette terre retrouvé[52]

One obvious and important way in which poets realigned language and truth was by demythifying the language of the authorities and revealing the trickery behind their words. Witness the many direct references to *la fausse parole* which were listed in the opening section of this chapter. The intended effect of this demythification was, of

course, to undermine the authority of the official language: to challenge its truthfulness. This is illustrated in Aragon's *Le Musée Grévin* , which itself exemplifies the attempt to ensure that the enemy's lies are exposed as such:

> Ils ont beau se mentir avec des mots immenses
> Et prétendre que l'aube est l'épouvantement;
>
> Ils ont beau se donner les gants de la clémence,
> Dire qu'ils sont venus providentiellement;
>
> Ils ont beau baptiser lumière les ténèbres,
> Elever l'ignorance au rang de la vertu,
> (...)
> Tout le monde peut voir les couleuvres sortir
> De ces bouches d'enfer qui parlent d'oiseaux blancs (pp. 8-9)

Part of the poets' function, as truth-tellers, was to make sure that everyone would, indeed, recognise the deception behind the enemy's speech.

Another way of doing this, apart from referring explicitly to *la fausse parole* , was to spell out to people the crimes committed by the Occupiers, and so reveal the true face of the enemy, concealed in the official press. There are numerous examples of poems which do this.[53] Figuring amongst them are the poems written about Châteaubriant and Péri, and Emmanuel's 'Près de la fosse', which have already been looked at in some detail.

The 'témoignage' aspect of Resistance poetry is crucial. It has come under harsh attack from certain critics, who argued variously, as we saw in the introduction to the thesis, that it transformed poetry into mere propaganda, or that it gave the poems a life-span more limited than that of 'real' poetry. It is appropriate here to look further at this question of 'poetry of circumstance', and to begin to answer and challenge those who have criticised Resistance poetry for being only a poetry that bears witness to contemporary, ephemeral, events. This challenge is made fully, and I hope conclusively, in my commentary of Tardieu's 'Oradour'.

Resistance poets, as we saw in Chapter III, considered that one of the basic truths about man is his circumstantiality. They believed that to make no reference to what was happening to people in France at the time would have been to ignore or deny this crucial aspect of man's existence, as well as to leave unchallenged the authority of

la fausse parole. It was clearly felt that in order for poetry to establish and retain its authority, or its air of truthfulness, poets had to disclose the events that they knew were going on around them. Edith Thomas argues this point forcefully in an article entitled 'Crier la vérité'. She contends that for poets to write at the time about 'irrelevancies' such as nature, was an evasion of the truth (see also Chapter II, pp. 134-7, and note 48 of this present chapter). She writes:

> Notre métier? Pour en être digne, il faut dire la vérité. La vérité est totale ou n'est pas. La vérité: les étoiles sur les poitrines, l'arrachement des enfants aux mères, les hommes qu'on fusille chaque jour, la dégradation méthodique de tout un peuple, - la vérité est interdite.[54]

It was considered essential that such truths, banished from the official language, should not also be banished from poetry.

In the most simple terms, then, Resistance poetry exemplifies a 'truthful' language by using language to relay factual truths that were being concealed by the authorities. On its own, however, this is a far from adequate account of the way in which the poetry asserts itself as a language of truth. It fails to distinguish clearly between the poets' use of language and that exemplified by *la fausse parole*, and suggests that this distinction lies in the moral superiority of the Resisters' 'truths'. It also fails to explain an essential point, which is why the poets chose to express themselves, and these factual truths, in poetry rather than in prose.

In a brief survey of Resistance poetry, included in her 'Chronique des livres depuis 1939', C. E. Magny makes the following comment about the poets' defence of language and, by implication, of truth:

> De toute part en France et des camps de prisonniers, répondant à l'appel d'Aragon, des voix allaient se lever, connues ou anonymes, pour "maintenir la véritable parole humaine" et protester par des chants contre une injustice contre laquelle ne pouvait s'élever la parole ordinaire, prosaïque et discursive, étouffée par l'oppression et une censure impitoyable.[55]

Magny draws attention to a point which I believe is of fundamental importance when she states here that Resistance poetry was able to do what discursive language could not. However, she simplifies the question misleadingly by suggesting that this was a matter of expediency - that poetry, being less transparent than 'la parole ordinaire',

could more readily escape the attention of the censor. She overlooks the fact that the laws of censorship were contravened by *all* clandestine writings. Aragon, for example, was able to talk as forthrightly about Péri's execution in *Le Crime contre l'esprit* as he did in either of his clandestine poems commemorating Péri. By the same token, legal, contraband publications such as *Poésie*, *Fontaine* and*Confluences* are full of subversive prose writings, which evaded the censor by dealing with such apparently innocuous matters as literary technique or art criticism. Contrary to what Magny implies, poetry was not the only means of expressing dissent during the Resistance, or of disclosing the injustices of the Occupiers. It is important to bear in mind that the poets not only had the choice of expressing themselves in poetry or in prose, but that they did, in fact, regularly use prose as a vehicle for their opinions. This suggests very strongly that there was a certain part of the poets' message - even, perhaps, another 'truth' - that could only be conveyed by a use of language that is specific to poetry. Albeit inadvertently, Magny touches upon a crucial point when she argues that the poets' 'songs' defended language and truth more effectively than prosaic language. Something was being said in the 'singing' language of poetry that could not be said in any other way: that could only be said in the type of language, peculiar to poetry, whose oddness strains against what Magny calls 'la parole ordinaire, prosaïque et discursive'.

It is necessary here to look closely at the manner in which the poets use language to implant their words as truth in the mind of the reader: to examine the poets' means of giving their words an air of authority, and then the nature of the authority that their words acquire. This, I believe, will highlight an essential difference not only between Resistance poetry and Resistance prose as 'témoignage', but also between the language of Resistance poetry and *la fausse parole* .

An important point to make here, although it is by no means the most essential, is that verse commands universal assent much more readily than prose. There is a popular, deferential belief that there is something solemn and consecratory about verse: a kind of sacred, ritualistic importance is attached to words that are bound together by rhyme and rhythm. Witness, for example, the rhymes that are typically used in

epitaphs and in announcements of deaths, or in birthday, Christmas and wedding cards. Consequently, poetry written in verse, particularly traditional verse, is likely to be perceived by the public as an important, authoritative utterance.

In his poem, 'Nymphée', Aragon draws attention to an essential characteristic of poetic language, which perhaps underlies this popular belief in the sanctity of the poem's message, and which allowed poetry to be used, at the time, as an effective weapon against *la fausse parole*. Aragon issues a typical protest against the authorities' arbitrary warping of the meaning of words. He writes of the need to restore meaning to a language that had been rendered blasphemous:

> Je parle avec les mots des jours patibulaires
> Où le maître bâtit le temple qu'il lui plaît
> Et baptise raison dans son vocabulaire
> Le loisir d'à nos poings passer cabriolet
>
> Il faudrait rendre sens aux mots blasphématoires (*EEP* 132)

This follows a reference by Aragon to the poem itself - 'la chanson' - as an exemplary utterance; its 'inalterability' curbing the waywardness of language that was fully in evidence at the time:

> Rien ne peut altérer la chanson que je chante
> Même si quelqu'un d'autre avait à la chanter
> Une plainte étranglée en renaît plus touchante
> Quand l'écho la reprend avec fidélité (*EEP* 132)

What Aragon highlights here is the ability of poetry to give language an apparently incontrovertible authority. What is said in the poem cannot, it seems, be said in any other way.

This, of course, is a feature of poetry in general, referred to frequently by poets and critics alike as one of its defining characteristics. It is what Jouve refers to as 'l'irréductibilité du poème' (*Apologie du poète*, p.11), and Eluard as 'l'évidence poétique'.[56] The irreducibility of language, as it is used in poetry, is what gives the poem its ring of truth - its 'évidence'. Poetry, Eluard says, 'rend inchangeables, précises, certaines vérités', and this through its ability to 'fixer des formules qui servent ensuite pour le coeur, ou la raison, ou le comportement, dans certains événements'.[57] In a discussion with Charles Haroche, Marcenac describes poetry in similar terms, as a 'production incessante du vrai et du sens'. He comments on the

fact that

> le silence qui suit le poème est de même nature que celui qui suit la démonstration. Quelque chose, par-delà cette cacophonie du quotidien, a été *bien* dit parce que enfin nous sommes devant - et je laisse parler René Char - ce "miracle de la conscience, de cette sensation de l'évidence qui, selon Claude Bernard, a nom vérité".[58]

Haroche, in turn, claims to have discovered in Marcenac's own poetry 'le secret du mot infracassable, dur comme la matière, au sens irrécusable'.[59]

In its attempt to create out of words, whose meanings are entirely arbitrary, something which appears to be as challengingly and indisputably there, and as 'évident' as a natural, material object, Resistance poetry is no different from any other poetry. As Aragon's 'Nymphée' highlights, however, this typical feature of poetic language - its appearance of being inalterable - assumed a conspicuous political function during the Occupation. For *la fausse parole*, seen by the poets as an arbitrary warping of the meaning of words, was a tangible reminder of the arbitrariness of language in general. So to forge what seemed like a necessary, indestructible link between words was, at the time, to resist the arbitrariness of language as manifested in particular by *la fausse parole* .

The 'évidence' of poetry - its air of authority and truthfulness - derives largely from the fact that the poet creates analogies in the poem between expression and content. There appears to be an identity between what is being said and the manner in which it is voiced. This is remarked on by the critic, Pierre Guerre, in his monograph on René Char:

> Entre l'objet nommé et le nom que lui donne le poète, il n'y a pas la moindre trace d'opacité, il ne peut se glisser de grain, même minuscule, capable de fausser cette identité . Non seulement aucune erreur n'est possible, mais encore la plus légère équivoque, l'embrun le plus ténu. (*René Char* , p. 48)

The compelling, convincing, reciprocity of expression and content in a poem is what I refer to as the 'singing' language of poetry. This differs significantly from what is usually meant by the music or the harmony of a poem. In his *Petit traité de versification française* , for example, Grammont argues that the harmony of a line of poetry results from a pattern of recurring vowel sounds, and has no expressive

function: 'L'harmonie est inexpressive et indépendante de l'idée exprimée' (p. 142). In associating the language of poetry with song, it is by no means my intention either to suggest this pure musicality, or to assimilate Resistance poetry to the tradition of popular songs and ballads. Charged by certain critics with employing the words 'chant' and 'complainte' in *Le Crève-coeur*, for poems which failed to be songs (in the sense of traditional ballads), Aragon responded:

> Le mot *chanson* ne signifie pas nécessairement *Marinella* ou *Au clair de la lune*. (...) Le mot *chant* traduit le latin *carmen* , qui fait aussi bien image magique qu'image musicale.
> ('Arma virumque cano', *YE* 29-30)

By employing the term, 'singing language', it is precisely this incantatory quality of language, as it is used in poetry, that I wish to evoke. The charm or magic of the poem, which compels us to respond to it as an 'évidence', lies in the fact that it combines words in such a way as to make their sounds and meanings correspond. Poetry, as Frénaud says, gives a statement ('un énoncé') 'la prime d'un chant', by virtue of a word play '[qui] accompagne et conforte le jugement porté, par une interprétation concomitante dans le monde des sons' (*NIF* 38).

The interdependence of expression and content in poetry has already been exemplified in this chapter, both in passing and, more systematically, in my earlier analyses of the two Emmanuel poems. The concluding commentary will again draw attention to this essential feature of the poet's use of language. To make clear at this point the manner in which a poem is given an air of authority or truthfulness, let us look briefly here at some extracts from the two poems written by Aragon in memory of Péri.

Aragon's 'Ballade ...' is a good illustration of the point made above, that the 'singing language' of a poem arises not so much from its adherence to any fixed form (such as the ballad), as from the fact that its patterns of sound underline its various themes. The notion of song is a central motif in 'Ballade ...', as emphasised by the title and by the constant references to song that are made throughout the poem. In using a refrain, built from an echo of the words used in Péri's last letter, and repeated every third stanza, Aragon reinforces the idea of song, and draws attention to the poem

itself as a kind of ballad. However, even a summary look at Aragon's use of versification here demonstrates that the poem's 'singing' quality is by no means a matter of its imitating folk song. 'Ballade ...' conforms neither to 'ballade' form nor, strictly speaking, to any conventional, fixed form. Against a strict alternation of rich feminine and masculine rhymes, Aragon sets a more unbalanced rhythm, through an unexpected use of heptasyllabic lines. The imbalance that is created by coupling a slightly clumsy and unorthodox syllabic pattern with a very conventional rhyme-scheme is used to great effect by Aragon, as exemplified below. It is the expressive use to which this unorthodox form is put which gives the poem its convincing, incantatory air; just as the more conventional form of 'Légende de Gabriel Péri' is 'enchanting' in the extent to which Aragon uses it expressively, to reinforce the poem's thematic content.

One of the main themes of 'Ballade ...' is, as we saw above, a contrast between the language used by Péri and that of his captors. Péri's use of language is shown to be exemplary, untainted by *la fausse parole*, while his gaolers' rhetoric is categorised as a cynical form of speech, an aggressive but futile attempt to persuade Péri to lie. The poem celebrates the failure of their rhetoric. In the fifth stanza, we have an example of how this failure is enacted in Aragon's own use of language. The unbalanced rhythm of the *vers impairs* enables Aragon to mimic the inelegant tones of Péri's gaolers:

> Rien qu'un mot la porte cède
> S'ouvre et tu sors Rien qu'un mot
> Le bourreau se dépossède
> Sésame Finis tes maux

Here, the heptasyllabic lines are divided up irregularly, with the stress that falls unevenly on certain accented syllables contributing to the breakdown of rhythm in the stanza. The jerky inelegance of a succession of short phrases emphasises the already spasmodic rhythm, which has the effect of undermining the gaolers' attempt to use persuasive rhetoric. Its clumsiness is unpleasing to the ear. It infects both the repetition of 'rien qu'un mot' and the chain of sibilants: rhetorical features which could seem persuasive, were it not for the fact that the rhythm makes them sound ugly and

unwieldy. There is a slight but perceptible contrast between this and Péri's speech, for which Aragon plays down the unevenness of the 7-syllable line. In the first stanza, for instance, the accented syllables are distributed more regularly, and the division of each line into different sense-groups is less apparent and therefore less disruptive to the rhythm.

It is also worth noting here that, like his gaolers, Péri repeats his words. However, as Aragon highlights in line 48, Péri's words are repeated *calmly* . They recur as a refrain every third stanza, and gain an air of conviction and authority from the fact that the intervals between their repetition are so long and measured. These intervals are pauses for reflection, which charge the repeated statement with a sense of deliberation. This contrasts markedly with the scurrying manner in which Aragon has Péri's tempters repeat their words. Their voices repeat the same simple phrases over and over again, from 'Tu peux vivre tu peux vivre / Tu peux vivre comme nous', to the even more frenetic 'Songe songe songe songe / A la douceur des matins'. Set in relief against the slow and measured insistence of Péri's own 'refrain', this impatient, aggressive repetition conveys a sense of frustration, and also of impotence. For while Péri's words are potentiated by their steady reiteration, those of his gaolers ring hollow, devalued by the obtrusiveness and over-insistence of their repetition.

In these ways, the rhythmic patterning of 'Ballade ...' serves to underline the distinction made thematically between Péri's language and *la fausse parole*, as represented by the language of Péri's captors. Comparable analogies between expression and content are created by Aragon in 'Légende de Gabriel Péri', a poem whose form is slightly more conventional, in so far as it consists of regular octosyllabic lines, and uses 'rimes embrassées'. Two distinct examples will illustrate again that the poem acquires its air of authority or evidence from the fact that Aragon manipulates this form, and language in general, into an expressive pattern which is analogous with the poem's thematic content.

Thematically, 'Légende de Gabriel Péri' celebrates the telling and creation of Péri's legend in defiance of the authorities' wish to erase Péri (and his execution) from people's memories. Lines 9-12 exemplify how this theme is realised in the manner in

which Aragon wields his words:

> Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
> Ils croyaient sous d'autres victimes
> Le crime conjurant le crime
> Etouffer Gabriel Péri

The authorities, we are told, attempt to stifle Péri, and thus prevent him from being made into a legendary martyr, by covering their tracks and burying Péri in a communal grave. Aragon's use of 'rimes embrassées' here helps to defeat this attempt. The impression given by this particular rhyme-scheme is that the two middle lines are encased by the two outer ones. In this stanza, the outer lines expose the crime that the authorities had tried to conceal, and voice Péri's name in a manner which helps to make him into a legend: as we have already seen, 'Péri' occurs as a rhyme-word every two stanzas. So the authorities' attempt to conceal their action, described in the two middle lines, is itself smothered (cf. 'étouffer'), as much by the rhythmic patterning of the words as by what they state. The attempt to exorcise the crime of Péri's execution is foiled again in line 11. This line is isolated through syntax from the rest of the stanza, and so 'Le crime conjurant le crime' is read as an isolated interjection. In defiance of the authorities' wish to have their crime erased from memory, the isolation of this line, and its structure, lay particular emphasis on the word 'crime'. It dominates the line because of its repetition, because it is a rhyme-word, and because, in the first case, the mute 'e' causes it to have particular stress. In the face of this insistent emphasis on the word 'crime', the attempted concealment of the execution, as a crime, fails miserably; again we have an example of an analogy created between expression and content.

A final example of how Aragon's formulation of words reinforces the content of his poem comes in lines 61-4:

> La lumière aujourd'hui comme hier
> C'est qui la porte que l'on tue
> Et les porteurs se substituent
> Mais rien n'altère la lumière

This stanza contains another central idea in the poem, that Péri's death is redeemed by the fact that the values and ideals he represented are lasting ones. 'La lumière' signifies some unspecified ideal or archetype which remains constant because it

continues to be represented and expounded by different people, just one of whom was Péri. Formally, as well as thematically, the word 'lumière' is emphasised as an invariable in these lines. It begins and ends the stanza, giving the impression of a cyclical movement that returns to 'lumière' as its fixed point of reference. At the same time, a dominant sound-chain in [ɛʀ] is followed through from 'lumière' to 'hier' to 'n'altère' and back to 'lumière', and the rhyming sound [y] in 'tue' and 'substituent' echoes and is echoed by the first syllable of 'lumière'. These two sound-chains increase the impression of a cyclical movement, and stress the prominence of the word 'lumière'. Because the sounds of 'lumière' reverberate in this way throughout the stanza, the word becomes a dominant phonic constant, just as, thematically, it signifies an unchanging ideal over which Péri, for a time, had custody. The stanza's air of authority - its own inalterability - issues from the fact that words are combined here in such a way as to have their meanings reinforced by their sounds.

As these examples illustrate, it is by dint of creating affinities between expression and content that poetry gives language a tenaciousness, and an apparently incontrovertible authority. The poem seems to witness a victory over the arbitrariness of language, with its patterns of sound and sense combining to produce a coherent, motivated utterance.

At the same time as it is undeniably there and 'évident', however, the poem draws attention to the fact that its air of authority is the result of a skilful manipulation of words on the part of the poet. At the risk of undermining its own authority, a poem makes manifest the string-pulling behind it. It does so by foregrounding language - by calling attention to itself as an act of language. This self-referentiality, if not specific to poetry, at least differentiates poetry very clearly from, say, an ordinary 'témoignage'.

As a typical example of a clandestine 'témoignage', let us look at an extract from *Le Crime contre l'esprit* , where Aragon describes the French authorities' treatment of Péri. In so far as it is an obvious attempt not only to inform, but to help shape the opinions of the readers, this extract is taken also as a representative piece of propaganda.

> On sait que Péri, député comme Michels et Catelas, ennemi juré de Hitler, haï par les traîtres à notre patrie, précisément parce que sa vie a été droite et qu'il n'a jamais varié dans sa voie, était depuis des mois entre les mains des hommes de Vichy qui cherchèrent jusque dans son cachot à l'acheter par un honteux marché de reniement. (...) Dix fois, on laissa courir le bruit de sa mort. Une dernière fois, on vint lui mettre en main le marché de la trahison. Il refusa. Le lendemain, il était fusillé par les Allemands. (pp. 31-2)

These statements ring true because they are presented by Aragon as established facts, because he utters them in a straightforward, factual manner, and because they confirm opinions that are probably already held by the readers. (The text is addressed to a readership which would have been in no two minds about the identity of 'les traîtres à notre patrie', for instance.) The authority and the effect of this text (like any other) derive from a manipulation of language. This can be seen in the touch of rhetoric underlying the initial, tripartite description of Péri, or in Aragon's emotive choice of descriptive phrases, or in the force assigned to Péri's refusal by the starkness of the isolated phrase, 'Il refusa'. However, this manipulation is relatively inconspicuous. Nothing in the account focusses attention directly on language, or encourages the reader to recognise that strings are indeed being pulled by the author. Language is used here in such an unremarkable manner that we would normally pay no attention to it. Its transparency tends to give the impression that the facts and opinions (the 'truths') that the words convey are independent of the words themselves. Aragon follows the aim of all propagandists here, in trying to implant in the readers' minds, as objective truth, certain opinions or perceptions or ideas that are essentially subjective. Propaganda thrives on an illusion of 'naturalness' or objectivity which would dissolve, should the reader become aware that its authority is based, precariously, on a structure of words.

Poetry operates very differently. The illusion of objectivity or 'évidence' that is created, as we have seen, by the singing language of poetry, coexists with its own dissolution. The poem, as I have argued, constantly draws attention to itself as an act of language. Sometimes this self-referentiality is explicit, as in Emmanuel's 'Près de la fosse', or, as we shall see, in Tardieu's 'Oradour'. Witness also Eluard's 'Gabriel

Péri': at the same time as Eluard attempts to build Péri into a proverbial myth, he exposes the process of mythification; he shows the reader his hand, in talking openly in the poem about how a name acquires meaning.

Even when a poem makes no overt reference to language, or to its own use of language, it still brings language firmly into the foreground. The singing language of poetry is conspicuously different from an everyday use of language, or from the use of language in a conventional piece of prose. Its oddness confronts the reader directly. It manifests itself in different ways - from the typographical arrangement of words on a page, to the use of traditional features of versification, to the essential interplay of expression and content that was commented on above. The peculiarity of this language draws the reader's attention to the fact that there is an individual behind it who has deliberately fashioned words into the configurations that help determine their meaning. While charmed, perhaps, by the coincidence of expression and content within a poem, the reader is well aware that such a close correspondence between the two is unusual, and is therefore aware that it has been skilfully contrived. By foregrounding language, the poet (unlike the propagandist) encourages the reader to see the poem as the attempt of a conscious mind to motivate the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign. Paradoxically then, the poem is given an almost tangible and natural authority by virtue of a use of language which deviates so conspicuously from the norm that it calls that authority into question, exposing it as a contrivance. The effect of this on the reader is examined further on.

Earlier in this section, I mentioned the possibility of another 'truth' being told in the singing language of poetry that could not be conveyed in discursive language. This other truth, I believe, lies in the fact that the emphasis given to language in a poem discourages the reader from believing that the truths conveyed by the poet are either objective or absolute. By showing that the impression of authority given by the poem - its ring of truth - results from a conscious manipulation of words, the poet draws attention to the fact that this authority is only temporary, and subjective. In so far as truths are only conveyed in words (and the poets demand that we recognise this), they, too, are subject to the arbitrary nature of language. Truths cannot be

pinned down or fixed, any more than a word can have an invariable or absolute meaning. The words in which truths are constructed are public words, permanently open to redefinition: witness the word 'patrie', or the name 'Jeanne d'Arc'. I would suggest here that the one fixed truth that is revealed in Resistance poetry is in fact the unfixity of truth: its temporary and personal nature.

Deliberate reference to this is made by Resistance poets. In 'La vérité', written after the Liberation, Seghers answers critics who had dismissed Resistance poetry for its ephemerality. He stresses a connection between time and truth, highlighting that the experiences related in the poetry were no less real or true for being subjective and transient:

> Non, ce temps fut notre vérité à nous
> Qui tournait de la nuit au grand jour, sûre et lente
> Sa roue. (*DP* 30)

It was perhaps to make quite sure that his 'truths' were seen as being relative to the times that, after the war, Seghers added dates to the titles of certain Resistance poems - changing 'Octobre' and 'Août', for example, to 'Octobre 41' and 'Août 41'. Similarly, Tardieu changed the title of 'Actualités', first published in *L'Honneur des poètes* (p. 33), to 'Actualités 42' (*JP* 91), deliberately stressing, like Seghers, that the poem, and the events that are evoked, are dated. This dating of poems, either at the time of writing or after the war, is a common feature of Resistance poetry: the poets make no bones about the fact that their words are time-bound.[60]

Eluard draws attention to this very conspicuously by entitling one of his war-time collections of poetry *Poésie et vérité 1942*. Commenting on the manner in which Eluard modified Goethe's title here, Gaucheron writes: 'Eluard ajoute simplement une date, qui souligne l'incompatibilité entre la poésie (la vérité) et la façon dont est traité l'homme, en France, en 1942' (*La Poésie, la résistance*, p. 148). In *Paul Eluard*, Decaunes suggests that through this title, Eluard meant perhaps to 'opposer l'humaniste olympien de jadis aux bourreaux du jour - ou, peut-être, qui sait? les confondre' (p. 193). While the conjectures of both critics are relevant, they overlook what I consider to be the most vital implication of the title, and perhaps also the most obvious. In adding a date to 'poésie et vérité', Eluard stresses that the truth

revealed in his own poetry is no eternal, absolute truth, but one which was construed in 1942. This dating does not limit the poetry (Decaunes writes that 'le millésime ajouté l'"actualise" terriblement' (p. 193); rather, it opens it up generously to future re-evaluation. The title stresses the impermanent, circumstantial nature of truth. In doing so, it captures very accurately the central and abiding concern of Resistance poetry, which is to demonstrate the historical character of man, language and truth alike. The truth that is voiced in Resistance poetry is, as Aragon says of the poetry itself, 'Eternelle enfin d'être datée' (*Chroniques du bel canto*, p. 25).

To criticise Resistance poetry for being bound to its time of writing is to fail to understand that the continuing philosophical, political and indeed aesthetic relevance of this poetry lies precisely in the poets' insistence on the historical nature of all these facets of human existence.

In conclusion to this section, and to introduce the next, which highlights the fraternal quality of language as it is used in Resistance poetry, I would like to develop here a point already raised, concerning the reader's response to the truthful language of the poetry.

Describing Marcenac's poetry, Haroche writes that an 'impérieux besoin de vérité partagée' is construed by the poet as 'un lien indissoluble entre son poème et la fraternité qu'il entend instituer avec ses lecteurs'.[61] Marcenac sheds light on this 'fraternal' dimension of truth in poetry, in stressing that when the poem, by virtue of saying something well, manages to produce, in the mind of the reader, 'cette sensation de l'évidence qui (...) a nom vérité', this truth is 'une vérité comme fulgurance, évidemment, non comme énoncé'.[62]

Poetry, it seems, is a useful way of conveying the idea of *fraternité*, and perhaps even of realising it in action, partly because of the manner in which the poem 'convinces' the reader of its authority, or truthfulness. The singing language of poetry gives the poet's words an appearance of truth. It suggests, irrationally, that there is a harmony between the poet and whatever he or she is writing about: that the poet has got it right. The apparent accuracy of the poet's utterance compels us to respond to it as if it were true. As Marcenac implies, we are not convinced here by the logic of a

well-reasoned statement; rather, we apprehend this truth as a 'fulgurance', and are overwhelmed and swept along by it. Yet at the same time, as I have argued, the poet makes a point of exposing the fact that this forceful 'évidence' is all contrived. This, I believe, is where poetry realises an act of *fraternité*. Enchanted by the poet's use of language, yet fully aware of its artifice, the reader is given the choice of whether or not to legitimise its authority. Char sums this up aptly in 'Partage formel', when he writes that 'Le poème émerge d'une imposition subjective et d'un choix objectif' (*FM* 73). The 'truth' told in the poem is not something imposed upon the reader, for the reader is left free to assent or not to the poem's authority. Should the reader freely accept and validate the poem as truth, then a new sense of pleasure and satisfaction is derived from the act of reading: the pleasure that accompanies a sense of community and complicity between author and reader. For in giving consent to the poet's utterance as truth, the reader enters into a pact with the poet, and is conscious of participating, freely, in an open act of *fraternité*.[63]

The method by which poets communicate their truths is far removed from the means used by the authorities in France during the war to establish their statements as truth. The legitimacy of official statements was an enforced legitimacy, which bullied the reader or listener into consent. It was a case of 'Entendez-les / ils sont les maîtres', as Marcenac puts it in 'Dire non' (*CC* 116). In 'Pensez', Eluard states that the authorities of the time used their freedom (and redefined it through this usage) to force their 'subjects' into submission:

> La liberté pourquoi faire
> Pour nos maîtres pas pour nous
> (...)
> Pour nous vaincre et nous apprendre
> A consentir sans la grande
> Raison qui fait l'homme grand
>
> Sans la Raison fraternelle. (*ARA*; *OC* I 1257)

The authority of official statements, in the press, on the radio, or on the bills that were posted on walls throughout France, was an authority legitimised by the might of the occupying forces, and not by the sympathy of the reader or listener. Some of these

statements may well have met with widespread approval, but the fact that they had no need for that approval or consent reduces the role of those who received them, even favourably, to that of a slave following a master. Poetry, on the other hand, requires that the readers recognise and exercise their freedom; in so far as a poem depends for its authority on the free consent of the reader, it brings into play and exemplifies in action what Eluard calls 'la Raison fraternelle'.

3. A LANGUAGE OF *FRATERNITE*

'Fraternellement seul fraternellement libre' (Eluard, 'Mes heures' *OC*I 1078)

'(...) la communion la plus étroite n'empêche pas la solitude: elle l'approfondit.'
(Emmanuel; *Aut* 271)

The official use of language is presented in Resistance poetry as something which creates discord and division between people. *La fausse parole* seemed, in the poets' minds at least, to mask the ability of language to draw people together and realise a sense of community. As Eluard puts it:

> Ils nous ont vanté nos bourreaux
> Ils nous ont détaillé le mal
> Ils n'ont rien dit innocemment
>
> Belles paroles d'alliance
> Ils vous ont voilées de vermine
> Leur bouche donne sur la mort (*ARA*; *OC* I 1255)

The discordant, divisive nature of *la fausse parole* is also highlighted in 'Les dents serrées', where Emmanuel, as we have seen, describes 'les mots entrechoqués, les lèvres / sans visage, se parjurant dans les ténèbres' (*LGP* 108). The fear of betrayal created, as Emmanuel puts it, 'des mondes de mutisme entre les hommes' (*LGP* 108). Equally divisive was the authorities' manner of imposing their words, or 'truths', upon others, without what Eluard calls 'la Raison fraternelle'.

In contrast to the discordant nature of *la fausse parole*, the language of Resistance poetry was consciously fraternal. While poetry is not necessarily

coextensive with *fraternité*, the poetry of the Resistance demonstrates clearly that poetry can be an effective means of conveying an idea of *fraternité*. In Chapter III, it was argued that *fraternité* is presented in Resistance poetry as a dialectic of self and community. It is a movement that is simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal, with the individual projecting outwards towards the community, and the community, in turn, safeguarding the individuality of each of its members. This final section of the chapter illustrates how, in certain conspicuous ways, Resistance poetry communicates and realises in action this concept of *fraternité*.

The previous chapter stressed that the need for *fraternité* was seen as something fundamental to man. Being at the basis of community, the need for language, or communication, was felt to be just as essential. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the poetry that was written in captivity. After his brief imprisonment in Fresnes, Audisio was to write: 'Le langage était au rang de nos soucis. Sans doute nulle part au monde ne sent-on mieux qu'il est la clé de nos échanges, la véritable affirmation de notre place dans l'assemblée humaine' (*FF* 60). Deprived of communication, prisoners experienced an almost physical need for it. In Decaunes's 'Parler se fait rare', for example, the isolation of prison life is qualified as a diminished existence, tending towards death; it is associated entirely with the loss of language:

> Je perds le secret de mon propre langage
> Je me fais vieux je me fais peu
> (...)
> Je ne sais plus ce que parler veut dire
> Les mots sont devant moi
> Collés entre eux abandonnés trahis
> Millions de pierres inutilisables
>
> Je perds le secret et le goût du langage
> Je m'ennuie avec moi
> Danger de mort (*Cahier des prisonniers*, p. 142)

As Gaucheron comments in *La Poésie, la résistance*: 'Communication fraternelle, c'est de cela que les hommes, dans le pire dénuement ont besoin, pour simplement continuer d'exister' (p. 170).

It was noted in Chapters II and III that Resistance poets often evoke a sense of isolation and imprisonment, as part of the general experience of living in an occupied country. Significantly, this experience is sometimes conveyed through references to

an uncanny silence having descended on France (see pp. 89-91, above). It seems that during the Occupation, there was a common and keenly felt need for a community of expression.

One of the most obvious ways in which Resistance poetry answered this need was in its foregrounding of language - and of the language of poetry in particular - as an act of communication. This is highlighted in 'Poésie et défense de l'homme' (*Almanach des Lettres françaises*): 'C'est parce qu'il fonde l'être-pour-autrui que le langage - décrit comme dialogue - est finalement le lieu même de la personne humaine. Aussi, fût-ce délibérément vers la communication que les poètes, et les meilleurs, se tournèrent' (p. 74). As we saw in Chapter I, Resistance poets consciously moved away from the hermeticism which had characterised much of the poetry written before the war. Believing that too much attention had been paid to the poem as a 'mot-objet', they shifted the emphasis to poetry as a more direct form of communication, to be apprehended more directly by the reader. The task of finding, as Aragon puts it, 'des mots couleur de tous les jours' (*DF* 21), or 'des mots simples comme le monde' (*DF* 22), took precedence, for Resistance poets, over the need to assert their individuality in a private language, that would have been inaccessible to the general public. The simplicity and directness of much of the poetry written during the Resistance is evidence of the poets' wish to celebrate what Emmanuel calls 'ce langage qui me rend solidaire de tous' (*Aut* 210): language, that is, as a common denominator between people, or as a place where 'les hommes se retrouvent et communient' (Emmanuel; *Aut* 262). Gaucheron captures this well when he describes Resistance poetry as 'la poésie transformée en mots de passe, (...) créant toutes sortes de complicités entre les poètes et ceux qui les écoutent' (*La Poésie, la résistance*, p. 156). For a fuller discussion of this transformation of poetry - the deliberate shift in emphasis from hermeticism to accessibility - I would refer the reader back to Chapter I.

It is important to remember that while language in general (emphasised as communication) inspired a sense of community, the use of the French language in particular inspired a sense of belonging to a specific community - the French *patrie* - at a time when that community was being systematically destroyed. In 1942, for

example, 'Joseph Delorme' writes that 'A nos coeurs indomptés, (...) tout ce qui parle notre langue est notre terre'; Louis Martin-Chauffier evokes the same identification of the French language and the French *patrie* in his article 'Ma patrie la langue française'. The *langue française* was affirmed then as a place in which a community is realised in a sharing of ideas. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter II, the French language had become the only place in which certain ideas could be shared. Gaucheron puts it thus in *La Poésie, la résistance*: 'Ayant perdu certains aspects de sa vie et de ses moeurs, en face d'une autorité étrangère, il est certain que la langue fait office de bien national' (p. 122). For this reason, he says, 'Parler français en présence d'Allemands qui ne comprennent rien est un plaisir' (p. 122). This pleasurable sense of community, and of complicity against the Occupier, was heightened by the use of that exalted form of the French language that is French poetry. Again, this is pointed out by Gaucheron:

> La communauté de langage est un élément, non suffisant certes, d'une complicité des coeurs. Il suffit d'aller un peu plus loin dans le jeu de mots, dans le langage à double sens, pour que cette complicité devienne joyeuse. Il suffit d'aller jusqu'au langage poétique, au point où ce qu'il y a de plus riche dans la langue n'est pas susceptible d'apprentissage, pour que l'expression poétique soit ressentie comme une parcelle de patrie, comme quelque chose d'absolument inaliénable.
>
> (p. 122)

The return to traditional forms of versification is particularly significant in this respect. These forms had the advantage not only of being instantly accessible and of commanding universal assent, but also of being seen to be distinctively French. Aragon made a point of stressing this during the war. He explains in 'Arma virumque cano', for example, that what motivated his emphasis on rhyme in 'La rime en 40', was the fact that 'la rime est l'élément caractéristique qui libère notre poésie de l'emprise romaine, et en fait la poésie française' (*YE* 16). He talks of the revival of interest in 'la longue histoire du vers français' (*YE* 15), and insists that he, and other poets, were using the established framework of French versification 'comme le sanglot organique et profond de la France, comme ce parler de toute la terre et de toute l'histoire' (*YE* 16).

As we saw in the introduction to the thesis, the widespread (but by no means exclusive) use of traditional form in Resistance poetry provoked a certain amount of

criticism both during and after the war. Péret, whose comments are representative, took it as evidence of a lack of linguistic experimentation in the poetry, which reinforced what he saw as its reactionary content. Of those Resistance poems he had seen, published in the Rio de Janeiro edition of *L'Honneur des poètes*, Péret writes :

> ce n'est pas un hasard si leurs auteurs ont cru devoir, en leur immense majorité, revenir à la rime et à l'alexandrin classiques. La forme et le contenu gardent nécessairement entre eux un rapport des plus étroits et, dans ces "vers", réagissent l'un sur l'autre dans une course éperdue à la pire réaction. (*Dés* 82)

In answer to this, and other such criticisms, it is essential to stress that challenging the linguistic status quo is not, as they tend to imply, a simple matter of writing in free verse in preference, for instance, to classical alexandrines. Aragon certainly saw no contradiction between his interest in traditional form and his assertion, in 'Arma virumque cano', that 'il n'y a poésie qu'autant qu'il y a méditation sur le langage, et à chaque pas réinvention de ce langage' (*YE* 14). Indeed, the use of regular form in Resistance poetry could itself be seen as a challenge to free verse - which by then had become the established mode of expression in poetry - and hence as a 'reinvention' of poetic language. Aragon draws attention to this in 'De l'exactitude historique en poésie', where he comments on his own use of traditional form:

> Je n'ai jamais (...) voulu donner d'autre exemple que celui de la liberté dans l'écriture et par exemple de la liberté devant la tyrannie du vers libre, devenu à son tour sacré (*régulier*, comme on dit dans le milieu). (*EEP* 99)

It should also be noted that certain Resistance poets exercised an obvious freedom in their use of fixed forms: most notably Robert Desnos, in a series of sonnets written in slang ('A la caille', *DA* 216-21).

This is not to suggest, however, that it was simply by reworking the 'regular' forms of poetry that Resistance poets challenged the linguistic status quo. Its linguistic inventiveness lies much deeper than this, in the relations that the poets found between expression and content - or in what I have defined as the 'singing language' of poetry. Analogies between expression and content can be made just as effectively in a poem which uses traditional form as in one which does not. This has already been illustrated in my analyses of Emmanuel's 'Près de la fosse' and 'Les dents serrées', both of

which are written in alexandrines, and in my comments on Aragon's 'Légende de Gabriel Péri'. It is hoped that these analyses, along with my short concluding commentary on Tardieu's 'Oradour', will help dispel any assumption that the use of regular form necessarily entails linguistic conformism.

It was to make a more political point that Aragon insisted, during the Resistance, on the freedom and individuality inherent in his own use of the traditional forms of French versification. In 'Arma virumque cano', he refers to the fact that French songs and folklore had been given the 'force de loi' in Vichy France, and alludes to the popular songs that were then sung in the 'Chantiers de jeunesse' (*YE* 19).[64] In stressing the individuality of his own 'songs', Aragon deliberately dissociates his poetry from the type of team-spirit collectivism that Vichy attempted to foster in its promotion of popular, French culture. It was seen in Chapter II that the Vichy régime made a point of attacking individualism in literature, viewing it as the decadent offspring of Republicanism. The idiosyncratic use of traditional form in Resistance poetry, which laid as much emphasis on individuality as on community, was clearly antithetic to the collective ideal that was being spread by the French and German authorities alike.

In so far as it embodies a dialectic of individuality and community (or of freedom and constraint), this return to traditional form can be seen as an analogue of the concept of *fraternité* that is expounded in Resistance poetry. Two other prominent features of the poets' use of language are, in my mind, similarly analogous with this idea of *fraternité*.

First, in responding to public events, the poets frequently acted as a collective voice, speaking on behalf of an entire community about events which affected that community. Yet within these poems, the individual nature of the poet's reponse is always made clear. A good illustration of this is the poets' manner of voicing the French *patrie*; as we saw in Chapter II, the attack on France - a public event - was frequently described in the poetry in terms of a private tragedy. This reciprocity of self and community is also stressed in poems which refer to the suffering and the death of others within the community. Masson, for example, identifies himself so entirely with

his unnamed friends and comrades, that on hearing about the death of certain amongst them, he writes:

> (...) qui dort dans la fosse du bois? Est-ce ma vie?
> Dans mes amis je suis mort tant de fois! Est-ce ma vie, si
> semblable à celle de mon frère
> qu'elle lui emprunte ses yeux vitreux, sa gorge déchirée
> d'un fer,
> et jusqu'à cette horrible bouche muette? (*LNM* 72-3)

Marcenac's suffering is clearly no less vicarious than this when he writes, in 'La mémoire des morts': 'J'ai le sommeil léger des condamnés à mort / Ceux qu'on a tués hier m'empêchent de dormir' (*CF* 64). The same intense, personal suffering is evoked in Tardieu's 'Le visiteur', where the poet writes of being haunted by the memory of some anonymous figure:

> Quand il revient quand il cogne
> de son front contre ma porte
> je ne sais plus comment vivre (*JP* 96)

For a final, and very powerful example of a collective event being experienced and expressed as a most personal injury, I would refer the reader forward to my commentary on Tardieu's 'Oradour'.

The second, related, feature of Resistance poetry, which is similarly metaphorical for the concept of *fraternité* that it expounds, lies in the fact that so many poems were published anonymously or pseudonymously at the time. The anonymity of the poetry has two distinct, but complementary effects. First, it plays down the importance of the author's individuality, and stresses the notion of the poet acting as a collective voice. This is highlighted in the introduction to Emmanuel's 'Otages' and Seghers's 'Octobre', in the Swiss review, *Traits*, where they were first published, anonymously. The editor writes here that 'pour diverses raisons, ils [les deux auteurs] préfèrent que les textes suggèrent, dans leur anonymat, l'idée de cette grande communion silencieuse qu'ils célèbrent'.[65] At the same time as it suggests communion, and lays emphasis on the poem as a collective utterance, this anonymity has the opposite effect, of highlighting the poem as an individual expression. There is a contrast here between the idea of the poets relinquishing their individuality in a common aim, and the fact that their voices are still obviously distinctive. In a

collection such as *L'Honneur des poètes*, for example, the poems are all pseudonymous and cannot (or could not, at the time of publication), be identified with any particular author; paradoxically, this 'facelessness' makes the distinctiveness and individuality of each voice stand out all the more clearly. The poets' anonymity also suggests to the reader that these individual voices could belong to any of the people that he or she might encounter. This inspires, simultaneously, a sense of complicity with others and a complicitous awareness of the individuality of other people. This mirrors again, in a minor but significant way, the poets' concept of *fraternité* as a dialectic of individuality and community.

In conclusion to this section and to this chapter, I would suggest one final way in which Resistance poetry conveys this dialectical notion of *fraternité*. It was argued before that in making their language more accessible, Resistance poets foregrounded language, and poetry in particular, as an act of communication. Emphasis is laid thus on the individual's (the poet's) expansive movement outwards, towards the community. The reader's part in this act of communication is crucial, as the poets themselves point out. Char says in 'Partage formel' that 'Le poème est toujours marié à quelqu'un' (*FM* 69); in *Poésie involontaire et poésie intentionnelle*, Eluard states that 'Les véritables poètes n'ont jamais cru que la poésie leur appartînt en propre' (*OC* I 1132); similarly, in his article 'Poésie et révolution', Masson writes:

> Notre poème n'est pas à nous. Le poème n'est fait, n'est poème, que lu; tant qu'il n'a pas reçu le baptême du lecteur, il n'est qu'hypothèse. (...) Nous ne sommes qu'à l'origine de cette ode que nous avons écrite, de ce recueil, de ce volume: nous donnons la vie, mais c'est le lecteur qui élève cet être né de nous et qui en fait un homme. (p. 7)

An important way in which Resistance poetry realises the notion of *fratérnité*, not just as a projection towards the community, but as a generous concern with other people's freedom and individuality, is in leaving the reader free to interpret the words of the poem, and thus to recreate the poem's significance. This, I believe, is what Eluard referred to before the war when he wrote in 'L'évidence poétique' that 'Le poète est celui qui inspire bien plus que celui qui est inspiré' (*OC* I 515): a remark echoed by Tavernier during the war, in a review of wartime poetry: 'que l'artiste laisse

au lecteur une part de création, voilà ce qui marque non l'oeuvre parfaite, mais l'oeuvre finie'.[66]

Resistance poets make manifest the fact that their words are public words, which belong to the community at large. In donating them to the community, the poets generously allow them to be reinvested with divergent meanings, knowing that the connotations of these public words will change from time to time and from reader to reader. This has already been illustrated in the previous section, where we saw how the poets make explicit the fact that their truths, being words, are dated. They conspicuously allow for the value of their utterance to change, and for their poems to be 'reindividualised' by each contemporary reader. Char makes this point obliquely in 'Partage formel', where he defines the poem as 'une assemblée en mouvement de valeurs originales déterminantes en relations contemporaines avec *quelqu'un que cette circonstance fait premier*' (*FM* 73). Tavernier makes it more directly in his article, 'Quatre aspects de la poésie':

> Le lecteur accomplit sur le poème qui lui est livré un travail semblable à celui qui est à l'origine de l'oeuvre: grâce à celle-ci, il devient poète. Certes, le sens qu'il prête au poème et qui est le sens même de sa vie n'a sans doute pas été rêvé par le créateur. Mais qu'importe, puisque celui-ci a précisément laissé le champ libre à toutes les interprétations humaines.[67]

In so far as the reader charges the words of the poet with a connotative meaning that corresponds to 'le sens même de la vie', the poem realises an act of *fraternité*. For an almost tangible sense of communion derives from the fact that someone else's words have inspired an affirmation of our own uniqueness and individuality.

NOTES

1. 'D'une poésie armée', *Poesie 42*, 4 (juillet-septembre 1942), p. 61.

2. 'Sur une philosophie de l'expression', *Poésie 43*, 17 (décembre1943-février 1944), p. 23.

3. *Les Lettres françaises*, 27 (28 octobre 1944), p. 1.

4. Ibid., p. 5.

5. A list of these writers was published in *Les Lettres françaises*, 220 (5 août 1948), p. 3.

6. 'Le tombeau d'Edgar Poe', *Poésies*, p. 94.

7. For an interesting discussion of this problem, see R. Sheppard, 'The Crisis of Language' in *Modernism* (edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane), pp. 323-36.

8. In *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Vol. II, pp. 123-7.

9. Ibid., p. 125.

10. Ibid., p. 126.

11. Ibid., p. 125.

12. Ibid., p. 126.

13. These are the words with which a French journalist, Dominique Pouchin, introduces his description of the massacre of several hundred Palestinian civilians at Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in West Beirut in September 1982 ('La Mort à ciel ouvert', *Le Monde*, 21 septembre 1982, p. 1). A suitable epigraph for this section of the chapter, this serves as a reminder of the continuing relevance of poetry written during the Resistance.

14. For a detailed analysis of this poem see I.Higgins, 'Against petrifaction: Ponge's "Baptême funèbre"'.

15. René Lacôte, 'Ecriture déliée', *L'Honneur des poètes II. Europe*, p. 100.

16. For this theme of the word of God being defiled by *la fausse parole*, see also Alain Borne's 'Ce visage cravaché' (*Co* 64-5).

17. *Poésie 43*, 15 (juillet-août 1943), p. 32.

18. In *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Vol II, p. 191.

19. *Confluences*, 4 (octobre 1941), p. 463.

20. Published under the pseudonym of Malo Lebleu in *L'Honneur des poètes*, p. 39. See also Audisio's 'Radio malheur' (*PLN 151*) for the idea of the air waves being contaminated by lies and hatred, and René Blech's 'Les roses de Paris' for a specific attack on the collaborationist press in Paris (*L'Honneur des poètes*, pp. 54-8).

21. Published under the pseudonym of Hugo Vic in *L'Honneur des poètes II. Europe*, p. 62.

22. *Les Lettres françaises*, 27 (28 octobre 1944), p. 1.

23. This is the title given to an excerpt from Marat's *Les Chaînes de l'esclavage* which was published in *L'Eternelle revue* ((nouvelle série), 1 (décembre 1944), p. 16). Its contemporary relevance was obvious:

> Abusés par le mots, les hommes n'ont pas horreur des choses les plus infâmes, décorées de beaux noms, et ils ont horreur des choses les plus louables, décriées par des noms odieux. Aussi l'artifice ordinaire des cabinets est-il d'égarer les peuples en pervertissant le sens des mots.

24. *L'Eternelle revue*, 2 (juillet 1944), p. 9.

25. See note 17. For a more satirical expression of this idea of words having been diverted from their former meanings, see 'Nouvel Alphabet Français', an anonymous text reproduced in *Europe*, p. 241.

26. *La Pensée libre*, 2 (janvier 1942), p. 31.

27. See note 24.

28. Char explains his reasons for not publishing any of his poetry in a letter written to Francis Curel in 1941,where he talks of the 'incroyable et détestable exhibitionnisme' of some of his contemporaries (*RBS* 12). He was referring here to the exhibitionism of a Brasillach or a Drieu la Rochelle: Collaborationists with whom he refused to associate himself in any way. Char felt that the act of publishing his poetry at the time would have signalled a tacit agreement with the official regime.

29. In *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Vol. II, p. 119.

30. In H. Pouzol, *La Poésie concentrationnaire*, p. 26. See also Jean Bernard, 'Prières pour les prisonniers de Fresnes' (in *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Vol. II, p. 93), and Jean Wahl, 'Petite volonté farouche' (in *L'Honneur des poètes* (Rio de Janeiro), p. 23).

31. The same thing is implied in Guillevic's 'Souvenir', written in memory of Péri.

32. *Pierre Seghers*, p. 66.

33. 'Il n'y avait que le silence ...', in *La Résistance et ses poètes*, Vol. II, p. 272.

34. *L'Eternelle revue* (nouvelle série), 1 (décembre 1944), p. 2.

35. Under the pseudonym of Jean Amyot in *L'Honneur des poètes*, p. 59.

36. 'Secrets de beauté', *Fontaine*, 42 (mai 1945), p. 167.

37. 'Sur une philosophie de l'expression', pp. 22-3.

38. 'Poésie, nous voilà', *Les Lettres françaises*, 80 (3 novembre 1945), p. 5.

39. See note 19.

40. *Le Figaro*, 23 octobre 1941, p. 1.

41. *Au Pilori*, 21 mai 1942, p. 3.

42. Eluard's 'Epitaphe (i)' conveys the same idea of Péri still being present as a voice, without making reference to Péri's own words. Eluard imagines here what Péri would say after his death, and presents the words as Péri's, not his own. Having Péri narrate his own epitaph, in 1952, is a powerful means of expressing his continued presence. As 'Péri' himself says in the poem: 'Je suis dans ton présent comme y est la lumière / Comme un homme vivant qui n'a chaud que sur terre'.

43. The most complete version of Péri's final letter can be found in Duclos's *Lettres des fusillés* (p.32). It differs in various significant ways from the one recorded by Aragon, and is reproduced below for this reason:

> (...)
> Que mes amis sachent que je suis resté fidèle à l'idéal de toute ma vie; que mes compatriotes sachent que je vais mourir pour que vive la France. Une dernière fois j'ai fait mon examen de conscience: il est très positif. C'est cela que je voudrais que vous répétiez autour de vous. J'irais dans la même voie si j'avais à recommencer ma vie.
> J'ai souvent pensé cette nuit à ce que mon cher Paul Vaillant-Couturier disait avec tant de raison, que le communisme est la jeunesse du monde et qu'il prépare des lendemains qui chantent.
> Sans doute est-ce parce que Marcel Cachin a été mon bon maître que je me sens fort pour affronter la mort.
> Adieu! et que vive la France!

44. For the use of the wind as a metaphor for clandestine writing see also Aragon's 'Romance des quarante-mille' (*DF* 41-2) and 'Le conscrit des cent villages' (*DF* 49-51), Bérimont's 'Le temps du beau plaisir ...' (*HP* 33), Tardieu's 'Le vent' (*JP* 97-8), and Masson's 'Pour le docteur Marcel Ulmann' (*LNM* 86).

45. See also Desnos's satirical sonnets, 'A la caille' (*DA* 216-21).

46. 'Le Langage', p. 9.

47. For further examples of poems which attract attention to this, see Seghers's 'Avenir' (*FA* 26) and Aragon's 'Le jour se lève sur la Fontaine des Innocents' (*EEP* 148-9).

48. See pp. 134-7, 143-52 above, for examples of the search by Resistance poets to find new ways of talking about nature and love: ways which would take into account the political, historical aspects of man.

49. 'Le Langage', p. 9.

50. Eluard reveals in an appendix to *Au rendez-vous allemand* that Lucien Legros was a seventeen-year-old who was arrested and delivered up to the Gestapo after a demonstration at the Lycée Buffon. He was condemned to death and, as Eluard tells, '[il] avait, lorsqu'il sentit sa cause perdue, proclamé très haut ses convictions, son amour pour la France et avoué tout le mal qu'il avait pu faire à nos ennemis' (*OC* I 1632).

51. *Les Lettres françaises*, 12 (décembre 1943), p. 2.

52. *Les Lettres françaises*, 18 (juillet 1944), p. 1.

53. Just two which attract attention at the same time to the process of demythification are Marcenac's 'Un jour viendra' (*CF* 43), and Aragon's 'La délaissée' (*DF* 48).

54. *Les Lettres françaises*, 2 (octobre 1942), p. 1.

55. *America*, 1 (juillet 1945), p. 77.

56. The title of a lecture he gave in London in 1936, at the first International Exhibition of Surrealism (*OC* I 513-210).

57. 'Dangers de la poésie appliquée' (discussion with Maurice Nadeau), p. 3.

58. Haroche/Marcenac interview, pp. 48-9.

59. Ibid., p. 42.

60. For some random examples, see Masson's '18 avril 1943' (*LNM* 39) and 'Août 1942' (*PI* 29-32), Char's 'Carte du 8 novembre' (*FM* 49) and 'Le loriot' (subtitled '3 septembre 1939') (*FM* 33), Emmanuel's 'Espagne 1939' (*TP* 91), Seghers's 'A ceux du 25 Août 1944' (*FA* 43-4) and Frénaud's '1er novembre 1939' (*RM* 88).

61. Haroche/Marcenac interview, p. 42.

62. Ibid., p. 49.

63. There are similarities between what is said here, about poetry, and the theory of freedom and literature which Sartre expounded in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*. In an article entitled 'La Littérature, cette liberté', which Sartre published clandestinely in *Les Lettres françaises* in April 1944, we can see this theory in its rudimentary form:

> On n'écrit pas en l'air et pour soi seul; la littérature est un acte de communication: le lecteur est aussi indispensable que l'auteur à la réalisation d'un livre. (...) Ainsi, la littérature n'est pas un chant innocent et facile qui s'accommoderait de tous les régimes; mais elle pose d'elle-même la question politique; écrire, c'est réclamer la liberté pour tous les hommes; si l'oeuvre ne doit pas être l'acte d'une liberté qui veut se faire connaître par d'autres libertés, elle n'est qu'un infâme bavardage. (p. 8)

Sartre omits poetry from his early studies of committed literature, for reasons already outlined in Chapter I. I would argue, however, that poetry applies this principle of freedom even more directly than prose,through the emphasis on the arbitrary nature of the poet's utterance, which calls for the reader freely to validate its authority, or not.

64. Vichy's promotion of popular culture and old French customs was an important feature of its 'return to the earth' policy, which stressed the moral value of tradition and rootedness. This is illustrated in 'J. Canteloube's' introductory comments on a selection of 'Chants populaires de la Vendée', published in *L'Action française*, (22/3 décembre 1940):

> ces chants, venus d'on ne sait qui, d'on ne sait où, chantés pendant des siècles par les générations successives, sont les seuls qui soient en complète harmonie avec les populations, avec le sol, avec les horizons d'une province ou d'un pays. Ils sont ainsi l'expression véritable exacte du peuple et de la terre de France (p. 3)

65. *Traits*, 2ème année, 3 (janvier 1942), p. 3.

66. 'Quatre aspects de la poésie', *Confluences*, 5 (novembre 1941), p. 578.

67. *Confluences*, 12 (juillet 1942), pp. 77-8.

CONCLUSION

During the thesis, I have necessarily considered the main threads of my argument in isolation from one another and by illustrating each with fragments from many separate poems. Now in conclusion I shall show how they combine and interact in a single text. I have chosen to discuss here Jean Tardieu's 'Oradour' (*JP* 99-101) - one of the best-known Resistance poems, and the last to be published clandestinely in Paris.

Oradour-sur-Glane, a small village north-west of Limoges, was destroyed by a detachment of the SS Division 'Das Reich' on 10 June 1944. Altogether 642 people were massacred. The men were taken to barns near by and shot, and the women and children were locked in the village church and burned alive. Not a single building there remained intact. The destruction of Oradour was as gratuitous as it was absolute. There had never been any Resistance activity in the village, and there were no *maquisards* in hiding there.

Tardieu wrote 'Oradour' on the evening that he heard the news of the massacre. It was published on the front page of the last clandestine issue of *Les Lettres françaises* (no.19, 1 août 1944).

ORADOUR
à Paul Eluard

Oradour n'a plus de femmes
Oradour n'a plus un homme
Oradour n'a plus de feuilles
Oradour n'a plus de pierre
Oradour n'a plus d'église
Oradour n'a plus d'enfants

plus de fumées plus de rires
plus de toit plus de greniers
plus de meules plus d'amour

plus de vin plus de chansons

Oradour, j'ai peur d'entendre
Oradour, je n'ose pas
approcher de tes blessures
de ton sang de tes ruines
je ne peux je ne peux pas
voir ni entendre ton nom.

Oradour je crie et hurle
chaque fois qu'un coeur éclate
sous les coups des assassins
une tête épouvantée
deux yeux larges deux yeux rouges
deux yeux graves deux yeux grands
comme la nuit la folie
deux yeux de petit enfant:
ils ne me quitteront pas.
Oradour je n'ose plus
lire ou prononcer ton nom.

Oradour honte des hommes
Oradour honte éternelle
haine et honte pour toujours.

Oradour n'a plus de forme
Oradour, femmes ni hommes
Oradour n'a plus d'enfants
Oradour n'a plus de feuilles
Oradour n'a plus d'église
Plus de fumées plus de filles
plus de soirs ni de matins
plus de pleurs ni de chansons.

Oradour n'est plus qu'un cri
et c'est bien la pire offense
au village qui vivait
et c'est bien la pire honte
que de n'être plus qu'un cri,
nom de la haine des hommes
nom de la honte des hommes
qu'à travers toutes nos terres
on écoute en frissonnant,
une bouche sans personne
qui hurle pour tous les temps. (*JP* 99-101)

In this poem we see a merging of concerns that have already been highlighted in the main body of the thesis. There is the idea of voicing an incident that is so atrocious as to defy expression. There is at the same time an attempt to ensure that this atrocity lives on in people's minds. As Eluard did with the name 'Péri', so Tardieu conspicuously attempts to transform the place-name 'Oradour' into a common noun,

or a proverbial myth, with a precise and lasting denotation. These concerns are combined and realised in this poem through powerful thematic and formal tensions between inarticulateness and articulate expression, and destruction and construction of meaning.

The most immediately striking feature of the poem is its constant repetition of the name 'Oradour'. Alongside this, and in apparent contradiction to it, Tardieu refers repeatedly to the fact that he cannot bear to see, hear, read or utter the name 'Oradour' (lines 15-16, 26-27). He refers to himself simply screaming and shouting inarticulate cries in response to the atrocity (line 17). These lines anticipate lines 39-49, where he refers to Oradour as nothing but a cry or a howling mouth, as we shall see further on.

It is significant that the poet's cries are ones which he gives to the people of Oradour (lines 17-25); the nightmarish faces he sees of the victims are strikingly described only in terms of eyes. The implication is that the atrocity was so sudden that the people of Oradour were unable to express themselves and their own fear and horror. This deprivation is just one of many images of Oradour as dispossessed. Laughter, songs and tears are further examples of the faculty for expression having been taken from the village (lines 7, 10, 38). Until the final section of the poem (lines 39-49), Oradour is personified as an entity which has had attributes and possessions, and which has been totally stripped of these - from its inhabitants to the fabric of its buildings right down to the smoke issuing from its chimneys.

Analogous to this theme of dispossession, the very word 'Oradour' is repeated so insistently that it becomes sheer sound; the name itself is dispossessed of its accepted meaning. Similarly, the phrase '(n'a) plus de' is repeated so often as to threaten to turn into nothing but sound; sound which at two points in the poem (lines 7-10 and 36-38) actually displaces the destroyed village and its name from its privileged position at the beginning of the line. The material aspect of language is foregrounded to the extent that content recedes (and this in itself, as we shall see, has a definite expressive function).

Coming as it does at the start of the line, 'Oradour' is never absorbed into the middle of a phrase; since each of the lines is end-stopped, 'Oradour' strikes the ear all the more forcefully, coming after a brief silence. This isolation of and stress on [ɔʀadu ʀ] does indeed turn it into something like an inarticulate cry, or a primitive moan of pain.

However, at least as striking as the fact that the village is stripped of its possessions, and the word of its meaning, is the fact that Tardieu does go on repeating the name - even when he says that he cannot or dare not. At the same time as he is divesting the word of meaning, his compulsive repetition of it suggests the obsessive scale of the atrocity and the implacable grip that it has on him.

After his second protestation that he dare not utter the name (lines 26-27), he immediately repeats it again, but this time in a way which begins to bring to the surface the significance, as well as the scale, of the atrocity: lines 28-30 may be said to be 'inarticulate', in so far as the attributive 'honte' and 'haine' are in apposition to 'Oradour' rather than being linked to it discursively with a verb in an orthodox sentence. This is a first realisation of the significance of this event, which the final section of the poem confirms clearly and articulately.

Line 39 is indeed a turning point in the poem. It is very striking that while hitherto Tardieu has repeatedly written 'Oradour n'*a* plus de', he now writes 'Oradour n'*est* plus que'. That is, from referring to Oradour as an individual village which *possessed* attributes, he now refers to it as only *being* something. Until now, Tardieu has been acting as a voice for the mouthless dead and drawing attention to his utterance as an inarticulate cry. Now Oradour itself is described as only a cry. But in contrast with the inarticulate cries of pain and outrage of line 17, this cry is in fact a shouted name. Furthermore, Tardieu plays on the double meaning of 'nom' as name and noun to give to 'Oradour' a quasi-dictionary meaning. It is a name/noun denoting the eternal and universal capacity of man for a shameful destructive hatred. It is significant in this respect that Tardieu refers to '[les] hommes' in general and to 'toutes nos terres', as

distinct from 'toute la France', 'tout le pays' or any other geographically or politically restricted entity. It was doubtless also to bring out the universal dimension of his text that as early as in *Jours pétrifiés* (1946), Tardieu dropped three lines which had figured in the original version (viz., between lines 29 and 30, 'Nos coeurs ne s'apaiseront / Que par la pire vengeance' and between lines 45 and 46, 'le nom de notre vengeance').

This crystallisation of a new meaning for 'Oradour' does itself crystallise a moral implication towards which the poem as a whole has been pointing. As we have seen, the emptying of conventional meaning from 'Oradour' derives significance from Tardieu's continually repeating it even when he has said that he cannot bear to. Now the references to 'offense' (line 40) and 'honte' (line 42) make that significance more specific; henceforth the name/noun 'Oradour' will, it is implied, carry a connotation not only of outrage but of determination to prevent such atrocities happening again.

As the analysis so far shows, far from being inarticulate, the poem itself is directed from start to finish to a clear thematic goal. The strength of the final message derives in part precisely from the repeated references to inarticulateness. It also derives, however, from formal features of the poem which are analogous to the thematic tension between articulateness and inarticulateness.

First among these is the heptasyllabic line. Unusual in the French tradition, this line cannot by definition divide symmetrically. The 3/4, 4/3, 2/5 or 5/2 split can never strike the ear as balanced or symmetrical. Consequently, given the predominance of *vers pairs* in regular verse, a poem in heptasyllables is a priori likely to give an impression of incompleteness, imbalance, imperfection, inelegance. (Depending on the reader's sensitivity, these heptasyllables may even be perceived as failed octosyllables.) The intrinsic unevenness of heptasyllables is relentlessly highlighted in this poem by the repetition of 'Oradour' as the first segment of the line. First, /vv/ sounds like the first half of a classical hexasyllable, but expectation is deceived and in each case the lines spill over beyond the anticipated 6-syllable mould. Second, the imbalance of the heptasyllable is more obvious when the introductory stress-group is

always the same than it would be with a more fluid distribution of stresses. These features give an impression of the unpolished, as if the outrage is too strong to be contained in a regular conventional form.

On the other hand, this same repetition of 'Oradour' at the start of the line sets up a rhythmic regularity which comes to dominate the poem. It is supported in this by the similar repetition of 'plus de' both within and more particularly at the start of the line. These features contribute strongly to the hearer's perception of the text as highly stylised, and endowed with its own regularity. In any case, anaphoric repetition is a traditional device in rhetoric, and for that reason carries further connotations of organisation and control.

Then again, these conspicuous elements of contrivance and control might lead the listener to expect, in a text that is palpably organised into verse with lines of equal length, that it exhibit that other feature traditionally present in regular verse in French, namely rhyme. The almost total absence of rhyme in this text is particularly striking because all of its lines are end-stopped. Suggesting as it does lack of polish, whether from incompetence, haste or over-powerful emotion, the absence of rhyme sets up a further contrast with the elements of regularity and therefore underlines still more strongly the tension between articulateness and inarticulateness.

The poem as a whole is an articulate expression of the experience of inarticulateness and the moral resonance of that experience in a given set of circumstances.

Tardieu's 'Oradour' is poetry of circumstance in that it refers to a quite specific political and military intervention. It uses regular form and it is conspicuously rhetorical. Yet far from being disqualified from poetry because of this, it fully meets the requirements of poetry, as outlined in the Introduction. It foregrounds the material aspect of language, even at the extent of this threatening to eliminate content completely. The more it does this, the more that elimination comes to acquire emotional and moral significance and to prepare the way for the introduction of a new meaning for the word 'Oradour'. The text has, as an essential theme, the very

question of the relation between expression and content. By the same token, one theme of the poem is the interdependence of world and language - an interdependence underlined by the implied urge to speak for the mouthless victims, the compulsive voicing of 'Oradour', apparently against the speaker's will, and the future survival of the village and the fate that has befallen it, in language as proverbial myth. This intention to create a lasting expression of the episode and its significance is also witness to the 'eternal' concern at the heart of the poem: the twin concern, first, to recognise the possibility that this evil is an essential feature of man, and consequently, second, never to give up the fight to prevent such atrocities happening again. This in itself makes the poem into something 'eternally' revolutionary, inasmuch as it implies resistance to an essentialist view of man. The circumstances in which it was written - against an established, totalitarian regime - and published - in an illegal Resistance journal - confirm, rather than deny, the text's quality as a poem of permanent resistance.

I would contend that one could analyse most of the Resistance poems discussed in the thesis in the sort of detail gone into here with 'Oradour', and that one would be satisfied that these poems exhibit the characteristics commonly supposed, explicitly or implicitly, to be those of poetry.

Resistance poetry is such a rich and many-faceted subject that I make no claims to have said the final word on it. On the contrary, if I have shown here that the literary-historical and theoretical concerns raised by the phenomenon of Resistance poetry are worth more serious consideration than they have hitherto received, then to my mind this study has fulfilled its purpose.

APPENDIX

Choice of poems commemorating the executions of the Châteaubriant hostages and of Gabriel Péri

I CHATEAUBRIANT

Luc Bérimont,[1]

Le temps du beau plaisir serpente par les plaines
Où les blés vont rugir avec leurs lions roux.
Les enfants couleront de ces toisons oisives:
Un peuple est à mûrir dans les caves de l'août
Des lèvres, par milliers sucent la terre ouverte.

C'est le cargo du blé, c'est l'océan du sang
On entend s'élever des vivats à la lune
Les morts sont à nourrir la bouche des vivants
Un étendard de vent bat à la grande hune.

Les couchés dresseront leurs poings d'épis luisants
De leurs ventres fendus jailliront des armées
Tout retourne à l'été tout rentre dans le rang
Le boulanger pétrit des neiges explosées.

Pierre Emmanuel, 'Otages'[2]

Ce sang ne sèchera jamais sur notre terre
et ces morts abattus resteront exposés.
Nous grincerons des dents à force de nous taire
nous ne pleurerons pas sur ces croix renversées.

Mais nous nous souviendrons de ces morts sans mémoire
nous compterons nos morts comme on les a comptés.
Ceux qui pèsent si lourd au fléau de l'histoire
s'étonneront demain qu'on les juge légers.

Et ceux qui se sont tus de crainte de s'entendre
leur silence non plus ne sera pardonné.
Ceux qui se sont levés pour arguer et prétendre
même les moins pieux les auront condamnés.

Ces morts ces simples morts sont tout notre héritage
leurs pauvres corps sanglants resteront indivis.
Nous ne laisserons pas en friche leur image
les vergers fleuriront sur les prés reverdis.

Qu'ils soient nus sous le ciel comme l'est notre terre
et que leur sang se mêle aux sources bien-aimées.
L'églantier couvrira de roses de colère
les farouches printemps par ce sang ranimés.

Que ces printemps leur soient plus doux qu'on ne peut dire
pleins d'oiseaux de chansons et d'enfants par chemins.
Et comme une forêt autour d'eux qui soupire
qu'un grand peuple à mi-voix prie levant les mains.

Loys Masson, 'Otages fusillés à Châteaubriant'[3]

Octobre l941

Ils ne s'en sont pas allés dormir dans la luzerne deux à deux comme des ouvriers fatigués
Seigneur et leurs yeux par vos étés ne deviendront pas ces colchiques des yeux morts ordinaires
fermés; les yeux des fusillés sont poudre sèche et ferment.

Ah coulent les nuages et l'automne blême et rotent les traîtres sur leur écuelle de sang français!
quand Pilate se dédit la Résurrection déjà heurte de son poing d'étoiles
le front de la vieille Judée ...
Octobre au coeur ouvert pousse ses morts et ses feuilles en longs voiliers
et pousse et traîne la vie.

Mais l'odeur du sang innocent à jamais sommeille dans la chair des femmes d'ici
Et il y a un astre rouge sur notre amour.

Le tyran peut dresser jusqu'au ciel ses cathédrales d'épouvante
et à tous les carrefours donner chaque soir son bal pourpre,
il ne fera pas tomber ces paupières que l'horreur retient écarquillées
tremblantes au vent d'aube et de meurtre,
Par-dessus les épaules des bourreaux les yeux victimes éternellement le fixent
sur les branches de la croix
quand octobre déchiré entre les faisceaux crie Christ Christ.

Christ
dont les mains sont de sang pour toucher le sang
Celui qu'on vit aux matins de Châteaubriant se pencher en multipliant son suaire
tandis que la Bête frappée déjà rougeoyait à l'horizon.

Pierre Seghers, 'Octobre'[4]

Aux fusillés de Châteaubriant

Le vent qui pousse les colonnes de feuilles mortes
Octobre, quand la vendange est faite dans le sang
Le vois-tu avec ses fumées, ses feux, qui emporte
Le Massacre des Innocents.

Dans la neige du monde, dans l'hiver blanc, il porte
Des taches rouges où la colère s'élargit
Eustache de Saint-Pierre tendait les clefs des portes
Cinquante fils la mort les prit,

Cinquante qui chantaient dans l'échoppe et sur la plaine
Cinquante sans méfaits, ils étaient fils de chez nous,
Cinquante aux regards plus droits dans les yeux de la haine
S'affaissèrent sur les genoux.

Cinquante autres encore, notre Loire sanglante
Et Bordeaux pleure, et la France est droite dans son deuil
Le ciel est vert, ses enfants criblés qui toujours chantent,
Le dieu des justes les accueille

Ils ressusciteront vêtus de feu dans nos écoles,
Arrachés aux bras de leurs enfants ils entendront
Avec la guerre, l'exil et la fausse parole
D'autres enfants dire leurs noms

Alors ils renaîtront vêtus de feu dans nos écoles,
Malgré l'Octobre vert qui vit cent corps se plier
Aux côtés de la Jeanne au visage de fer
Née de leur sang de fusillés.

II GABRIEL PERI

Louis Aragon, 'Ballade de celui qui chanta dans les supplices'[5]

Et s'il était à refaire
Je referais ce chemin
Une voix monte des fers
Et parle des lendemains

On dit que dans sa cellule
Deux hommes cette nuit-là
Lui murmuraient capitule
De cette vie es-tu las

Tu peux vivre tu peux vivre
Tu peux vivre comme nous
Dis le mot qui te délivre
Et tu peux vivre à genoux

Et s'il était à refaire
Je referais ce chemin
La voix qui monte des fers
Parle pour les lendemains

Rien qu'un mot la porte cède
S'ouvre et tu sors Rien qu'un mot
Le bourreau se dépossède
Sésame Finis tes maux

Rien qu'un mot rien qu'un mensonge
Pour transformer ton destin
Songe songe songe songe
A la douceur des matins

Et si c'était à refaire
Je referais ce chemin
La voix qui monte des fers
Parle aux hommes de demain

J'ai dit tout ce qu'on peut dire
L'exemple du Roi Henri
Un cheval pour mon empire
Une messe pour Paris

Rien à faire Alors qu'ils partent
Sur lui retombe son sang
C'était son unique carte
Périsse cet innocent

Et si c'était à refaire
Referait-il ce chemin
La voix qui monte des fers
Dit Je le ferai demain

Je meurs et France demeure
Mon amour et mon refus
O mes amis si je meurs
Vous saurez pour quoi ce fut

Ils sont venus pour le prendre
Ils parlent en allemand
L'un traduit Veux-tu te rendre
Il répète calmement

Et si c'était à refaire
Je referais ce chemin
Sous vos coups chargés de fers
Que chantent les lendemains

Il chantait lui sous les balles
Des mots *sanglant est levé*
D'une seconde rafale
Il a fallu l'achever

Une autre chanson française
A ses lèvres est montée
Finissant la Marseillaise
Pour toute l'humanité

Louis Aragon, 'Légende de Gabriel Péri'[6]

C'est au cimetière d'Ivry
Qu'au fond de la fosse commune
Dans l'anonyme nuit sans lune
Repose Gabriel Péri

Pourtant le martyr dans sa tombe
Trouble encore ses assassins
Miracle se peut aux lieux saints
Où les larmes du peuple tombent

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Ils croyaient sous d'autres victimes
Le crime conjurant le crime
Etouffer Gabriel Péri

Le bourreau se sent malhabile
Devant une tache de sang
Pour en écarter les passants
Ils ont mis des gardes-mobiles

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
La douleur viendra les mains vides
Ainsi nos maîtres en décident
Par peur de Gabriel Péri

L'ombre est toujours accusatrice
Où dorment des morts fabuleux
Ici les hortensias bleus
Inexplicablement fleurissent

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Dont on a beau fermer les portes

Quelqu'un chaque nuit les apporte
Et fleurit Gabriel Péri

Un peu de ciel sur le silence
Le soleil est beau quand il pleut
Le souvenir a les yeux bleus
A qui mourut par violence

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Les bouquets lourds de nos malheurs
Ont les plus légères couleurs
Pour plaire à Gabriel Péri

Ah dans leurs pétales renaissent
Le pays clair où il est né
Et la mer Méditerranée
Et le Toulon de sa jeunesse

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Les bouquets disent cet amour
Engendré dans le petit jour
Où périt Gabriel Péri

Redoutez les morts exemplaires
Tyrans qui massacrez en vain
Elles sont un terrible vin
Pour un peuple et pour sa colère

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Quoi qu'on fasse et quoi qu'on efface
Le vent qui passe aux gens qui passent
Dit un nom Gabriel Péri

Vous souvient-il ô fusilleurs
Comme il chantait dans le matin
Allez c'est un feu mal éteint
Il couve ici mais brûle ailleurs

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Il chante encore il chante encore
Il y aura d'autres aurores
Et d'autres Gabriel Péri

La lumière aujourd'hui comme hier
C'est qui la porte que l'on tue
Et les porteurs se substituent
Mais rien n'altère la lumière

Dans le cimetière d'Ivry
Sous la terre d'indifférence
Il bat encore pour la France
Le coeur de Gabriel Péri

Paul Eluard, 'Epitaphe (i)'[7]

Ceux qui m'ont mis à mort ceux qui ne redoutaient
Que de manquer mon coeur tu les as oubliés

Je suis dans ton présent comme y est la lumière
Comme un homme vivant qui n'a chaud que sur terre

Seuls mon espoir et mon courage sont restés
Tu prononces mon nom et tu respires mieux

J'avais confiance en toi nous sommes généreux
Nous avançons le bonheur brûle le passé

Et notre force rajeunit dans tous les yeux

Paul Eluard, 'Epitaphe (ii)'[8]

Devant ceux qui m'ont mis à mort
Devant ceux qui ne redoutaient
Que de manquer mon coeur sensible
La belle cible que j'étais
J'ai chanté l'homme qui viendra
Prendre des forces sur ma tombe

Ecoutez-moi vous qui luttez
J'ai dit l'espoir qui vous anime
Il n'y a rien dans l'avenir
Que je n'aie désiré meilleur
Nos bourreaux mourront en silence
Nous leurs vainqueurs notre voix chante

La joie de vivre tous ensemble

Paul Eluard, 'Gabriel Péri'[9]

Un homme est mort qui n'avait pour défense
Que ses bras ouverts à la vie
Un homme est mort qui n'avait d'autre route
Que celle où l'on hait les fusils
Un homme est mort qui continue la lutte
Contre la mort contre l'oubli

Car tout ce qu'il voulait
Nous le voulions aussi
Nous le voulons aujourd'hui
Que le bonheur soit la lumière
Au fond des yeux au fond du coeur
Et la justice sur la terre

Il y a des mots qui font vivre
Et ce sont des mots innocents
Le mot chaleur le mot confiance
Amour justice et le mot liberté
Le mot enfant et le mot gentillesse
Et certains noms de fleurs et certains noms de fruits
Le mot courage et le mot découvrir
Et le mot frère et le mot camarade
Et certains noms de pays de villages
Et certains noms de femmes et d'amis
Ajoutons-y Péri
Péri est mort pour ce qui nous fait vivre
Tutoyons-le sa poitrine est trouée
Mais grâce à lui nous nous connaissons mieux
Tutoyons-nous son espoir est vivant.

Pierre Emmanuel, 'Mémoire de Péri'[10]

Je ne sais rien de lui que sa dernière lettre
qui finit sur l'écho des lendemains chanteurs
mais ces mots éternels suffisent pour connaître
l'homme qui sut dresser ce chant contre la peur.

L'homme qui sut mourir en écoutant les sources
jaillir de son corps las rendu au sol profond,
l'homme qui te sourit ô Mort aux lèvres douces
et peupla ton néant d'amour et de chansons.

Il eut devant la Mort la suprême élégance
de tendre simplement son visage au soleil;
ce seul geste creusa d'un tel cri la distance,
que le seuil noir s'ouvrit sur d'immenses réveils.

Convient-il de pleurer celui que la joie pure
visita d'un espoir plus vaste que la Nuit?
Sa mort n'est-elle pas la dédicace obscure
du grand espace clair où sa mémoire luit?

Vous qui l'avez aimé ce mort vous soit un temple
dont les hymnes futurs emplissent le vaisseau
et que son souvenir sans ombre vous contemple
vous qui venez vous retrouver en son repos.

Eugène Guillevic, 'Souvenir' [11]

À la mémoire de Gabriel Péri

Ce n'est pas vrai qu'un mort
Soit comme un vague empire
Plein d'ordres et de bruit,

Qu'il nous envie
Quand nous mangeons.

Ce n'est pas vrai qu'un mort
Soit du sang ou du lait la nuit plus haut que nous.

Ce n'est pas lui qui rit dans l'arbre et dans le vent
Si l'on pleure au village.

Ce n'est pas lui non plus
Qui fait tomber les bols quand on tourne le dos
Ou la suie sur le feu.

Ce n'est jamais un mort
Qui nous prend à partie dans les yeux des chevreaux.

Il ne faut pas mentir,
Rien n'est si mort qu'un mort.

-Mais c'est vrai que des morts
Font sur terre un silence
Plus fort que le sommeil.

Loys Masson, 'Tombeau de Gabriel Péri' [12]

Nous serons tes enfants que chaque printemps ramènera
sous des charges de miel oindre de printemps nouveau tes bras
Nos femmes sur les routes tresseront en voiles de veuve la poussière
Nos enfants te parleront tranquilles à travers ta châsse de pierre
comme à un grand saint étendu qui les regarde.
Loin on entendra respirer les oiseaux dans les arbres.

Nulle fleur de marbre, nulle couronne, nul encens
Mais des plaies du Christ dans les nuages bas, son Sang
coulant goutte à goutte sur ton sang.

Lucien Scheler, 'In memoriam G.P.'[13]

> Lanières balafrant le soleil, le vent d'équinoxe lacère les nuées. Eclats du ressac. L'écume projetée roule et tremble dans les bas-fonds. Un inconnu longe la plage.Noirs oiseaux, ses cheveux s'insurgent sur le couchant. Il vaticine il va il disparaît, future chrysalide, au cocon de la nuit dont l'opacité s'affirme et le flux abolit sa trace de ses volants de soie.
>
> Tels des fléaux sur l'aire malmenant l'apparence
> et l'araignée
> nous serons rigoureux;
>
> Ainsi que l'orbite gardant l'oeil
> nous serons vigilants;
>
> Comme la bague épousant le doigt nu
> nous te serons fidèles.

NOTES

1. *La Huche à pain*, p. 33.

2. *La Liberté guide nos pas*, pp. 109-110. First published anonymously, along with Seghers's 'Octobre', in the Swiss review *Traits* (2ème année) 3 (janvier 1942), p. 3. It was published here under the collective title 'Octobre', with the phrase 'La rançon est atroce' as an epigraph.

3. *Délivrez-nous du mal*, pp. 70-71. First published clandestinely in *Les Lettres françaises*, 9 (septembre 1943), p. 5, in celebration of Pucheu being imprisoned at Meknès. Pucheu was the French minister of the Interior who had been responsible for selecting the hostages executed at Châteaubriant.

4. *Domaine public* , pp. 9-10. First published in the Swiss review *Traits* (see note 2).

5. *La Diane française*, pp. 37-9. First published clandestinely in *Les Lettres françaises*, No. 7, juin 1943, pp. 1-2. For the sake of convenience this title has been abbreviated to 'Ballade...' in the main body of the thesis.

6. *La Diane française*, pp. 65-7. First published clandestinely under the pseudonym of François la Colère, in Le Témoin des martyrs [Louis Aragon] (présentation), *La façon de vivre et de mourir de Gabriel Péri*, La Bibliothèque française, 1943, p. 12.

7. *Oeuvres complètes II*, p. 691. First published in *Soutes*, (Nouvelle série), No. 1, octobre 1952. Eluard wrote two epitaphs for Péri, the second being a variation of the first. To distinguish between them I have entitled them 'Epitaphe (i)' and 'Epitaphe (ii)'

8. (See note 7) *Oeuvres complètes II*, p. 1208. First published in the form of an autographed facsimile in *Les Lettres françaises*, No. 544, 25 novembre 1954.

9. *Au Rendez-vous allemand* ; *Oeuvres complètes I*, p. 1262. First published in *L'Humanité*, 13 décembre 1944.

10. *Tristesse ô ma patrie*, pp. 104-5.

11. *Exécutoire*, pp. 239-40.

12. *La Lumière naît le mercredi*, p. 9. First published under the title of 'Tombeau de G.P.' in *Chroniques de la grande nuit* (1943), p. 9.

13. *La Lampe tempête*, pp. 79-80. The 'G.P.' of the title refers to both Gabriel Péri and Georges Politzer. Politzer founded *Les Lettres françaises* together with Jacques Decour and Jacques Solomon, and was executed with them on 30 May 1942.

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